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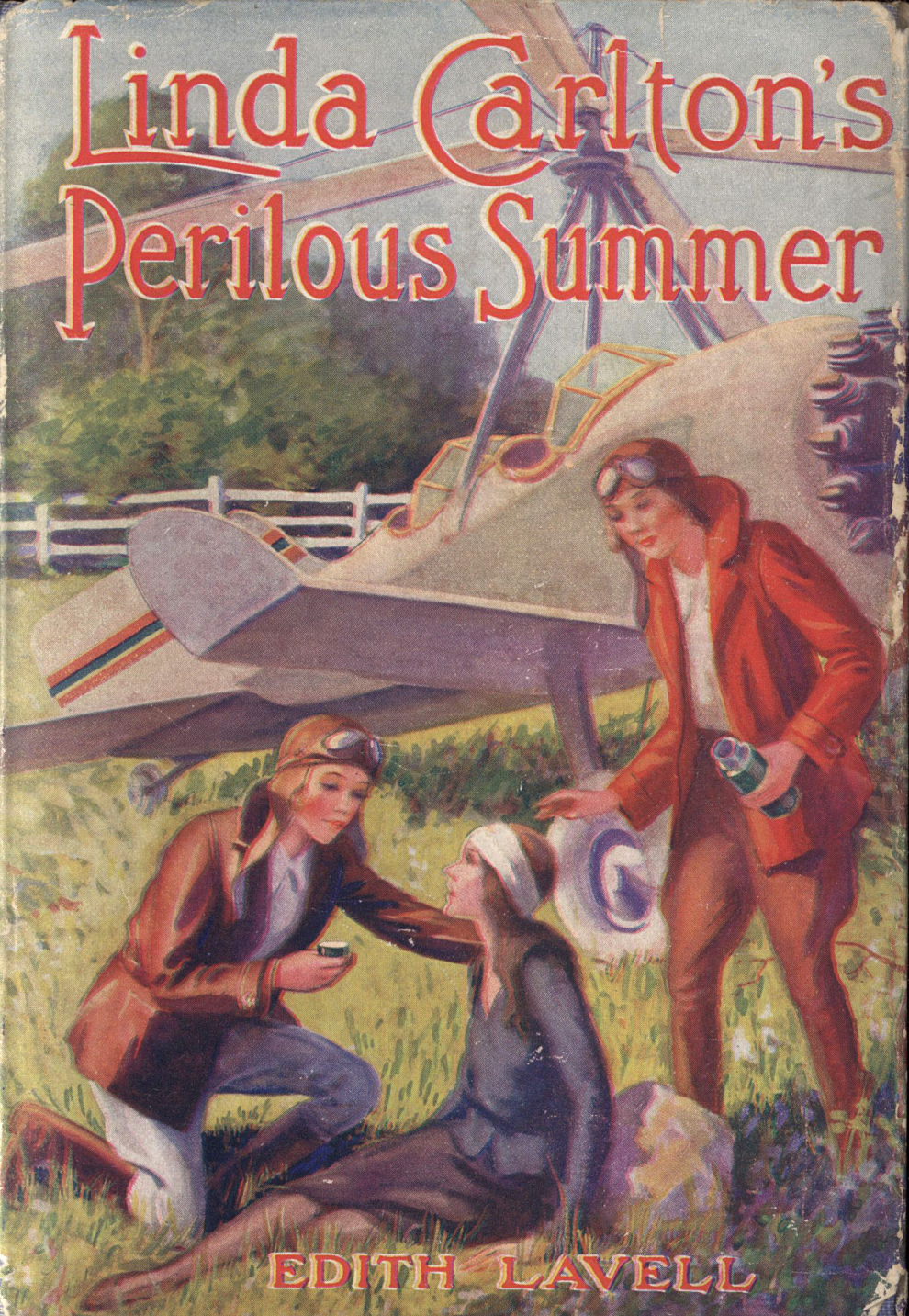

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LINDA CARLTON'S PERILOUS SUMMER

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LINDA CARLTON'S PERILOUS SUMMER

EDITH LAVELL

12-25-34

"How do you feel now?" asked Linda.
(Frontispiece) *(Linda Carleton's Perilous Summer)*

LINDA CARLTON'S PERILOUS SUMMER

By EDITH LAVELL

Author of

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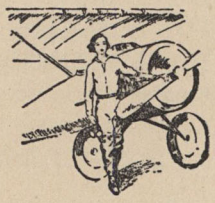

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By EDITH LAVELL

LINDA CARLTON, AIR PILOT
LINDA CARLTON'S OCEAN FLIGHT
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LINDA CARLTON'S PERILOUS SUMMER

Printed in U. S. A.

TO

MY HUSBAND

VICTOR LAMASURE LAVELL

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LINDA CARLTON'S PERILOUS SUMMER

CHAPTER I

The Accident

"AUNT EMILY, may we have a picnic lunch?"

Pretty Linda Carlton, the first girl in America to fly from New York to Paris alone, stood in the living room of her aunt's summer bungalow at Green Falls, and asked the question. Her blue eyes were pleading, although it was not for the mere favor of a lunch. The older woman glanced at her costume—a flying suit—and looked grave.

"Where do you want to go, dear?" she countered.

"Dot and I want to go off by ourselves—in the 'Ladybug.' "

"The 'Ladybug!' " repeated Miss Carlton, with despair in her tone. That was the name of Linda's autogiro, which she had purchased in June and flown south to Georgia. There she had met with

all sorts of disasters, had been kidnaped by a gang of thieves and stranded on a lonely island with this same girl—Dot, or Dorothy Crowley—as her only companion.

"I should think you and Dot would have had enough flying to last you the rest of your lives."

"Now, Aunt Emily, you know I could never have enough flying. I—I—belong in the air." Linda's eyes lighted up with joy, as they always did when she spoke of her favorite pastime. She came across the room and seated herself upon the arm of her aunt's chair. "I've stayed on the ground for two weeks, Auntie dear—just for your sake. But I've got to go up now—I just have to! You do understand, don't you?"

Miss Carlton, who had taken care of Linda ever since she was a baby, was so afraid of airplanes that she had never even taken a ride with her niece. She sighed.

"I suppose so, dear. But don't go far, and promise me you'll be back for supper."

"Oh, we will! I'm sure of that!" Linda replied, as she bent over and kissed her aunt.

The words she spoke were sincere; the "Ladybug" was in perfect shape, and Linda truly meant to plan her flight so that she would be back in Green Falls before sunset, but, of course, she could

not know that circumstances would step in and prevent her.

Fifteen minutes later, she and her chum, Dot Crowley—diminutive in size, but bubbling over with spirits and capable to the tips of her fingers, stepped into the autogiro, adjusted the self-starter and left the earth behind. It was a beautiful summer day, without a cloud in the sky, and the girls were as happy as birds.

Linda directed her "Ladybug" straight across Lake Michigan, over the heads of the swimmers and above the boats, for the shores of Wisconsin. An invigorating breeze was blowing, so that the girls were glad of their sweaters and helmets, and they laughed and sang as they flew.

It was over a hundred miles across the lake, but the autogiro took the distance with the ease of a motor car. On and on they went, pressing into Wisconsin, leaving the lake behind. When they finally landed in a field for their lunch, Linda confessed that she didn't know just where they were.

"Why, it's two o'clock, Linda!" exclaimed Dot, as she dived into the lunch box for a sandwich. "No wonder I'm hungry."

"So am I!" agreed her companion. "But I guess we better not go any further, Dot. We must get home to supper."

"I wish we didn't have to. You know what I love, Linda—flying over the lake. I always have adored all kinds of water sports, but honestly, flying *over* water beats everything."

"Want to fly to Paris with me?" suggested Linda, playfully.

"Sometime. But in a bigger boat than the 'Ladybug.' Now if you still had the Bellanca——"

"If I had, I wouldn't go," interrupted Linda calmly, reaching for another sandwich. "I wouldn't do a thing that would get me into the newspapers!"

"I don't blame you," agreed her companion.

Little did they think as they spoke thus idly, that that very evening they themselves would be requesting the papers to print a story which concerned them.

It all happened two hours later, with incredible swiftness. They were flying back across Wisconsin, low enough to watch the landscape, when Dot suddenly let out a shriek of horror.

"Look at that—oh—Linda!"

Her companion grasped the joy stick, and looked about expectantly, as if some plane must be coming at her which she did not see.

"No—down on the road!" cried Dot. "That car!"

Casting her glance downward, Linda saw what she meant. A huge car, driven by a man with a great mass of gray hair and a gray beard, at a speed nearing eighty miles an hour, zigzagged wildly in the road, rushing headlong at the forlorn figure of a girl walking beside the gutter.

"The man must be crazy!" muttered Linda, discreetly pointing her autogiro upward. "Or drunk!"

An instant later the car knocked the girl down, threw her up against the bank, and by some miracle, regained its position again and sped away.

"He's killed her!" screamed Dot. "A hit-and-runner!"

Linda brought her plane downward, but it was too far away to see the man so that she might identify him later, except by that beard.

"There isn't a soul in sight!" observed Dot. "You're going to land?"

Linda nodded; luckily her autogiro didn't need a special field. She descended and brought it to a stop, not far from the injured girl. She and Dot climbed out, dashed over the field to the road, and picked up the victim in their arms. She was a young girl, possibly about fourteen years of age, whether dead or merely unconscious, they could not tell. Blood was running from her head.

"We'll carry her over beside the autogiro, and apply first aid," said Linda. "Luckily I have all sorts of supplies with me—and water."

She was a pretty girl, except that there was something decidedly pathetic about her whole appearance. Her clothing was not ragged, but dreadfully out of style; her straight hair hung about her temples without any attempt to make it becoming. It was neither long nor short, and had no ribbon, no pin of any kind to keep it out of her eyes. Her sweater looked like a man's, and her skirt was evidently handed down from an older woman. Her whole body was so thin that she looked almost emaciated. Her face was a blank white, with no make-up to relieve the pallor.

Linda bound up the wound, and after some minutes the girl finally opened her eyes. Deep, black eyes they were, that appeared huge in such a small, colorless face, eyes that gazed at the girls without any understanding.

"How do you feel now?" asked Linda, still kneeling beside her, and offering her water from a thermos bottle.

The girl raised her eyebrows, and muttered a feeble, "All right."

Meanwhile, Dot ran over to the road to see whether there wasn't a car somewhere in sight.

But there was neither a car nor a house. It was a barren stretch of country—she didn't know where.

It was a lonely place indeed for a poor helpless girl to have such a dreadful accident, through no fault of hers. But now that she was conscious, surely she could tell them where the nearest town was, so they could take her to a hospital.

Linda, too, was realizing that they could not hope for a machine to come along, that they would have to take the girl with them in the "Ladybug." She was just about to ask her who she was, and where she came from, when she was startled by the very question from the girl herself.

"Please tell me who I am, pretty lady," she said, pathetically. "I can't seem to remember anything."

Linda gasped.

"I don't know. My friend saw the accident from the air—from our autogiro, while we were flying. You were walking along the road, and a car swerved at you going eighty miles an hour. I think the driver was crazy, or drunk, for he almost seemed to drive right at you. And he didn't even stop. . . . So we landed our plane, to look after you."

"What was I doing on the road?"

"Just walking. . . . Look in your sweater pockets. Maybe there's a letter, or something."

"You look—please. I'm so tired," sighed the girl, and her eyes closed.

Linda searched frantically, hoping that the girl would not die without their even finding out who she was. But the search was of no avail; the pockets of her sweater were full of nothing but holes.

Dot returned from the road and glanced questioningly at the girl, and then at Linda.

"Unconscious again?"

"No, I'm all right," replied the stranger herself, wearily opening her eyes.

"Have you thought of your name yet?" inquired Linda.

"No, I haven't. My head hurts so. Please take me to a hospital!"

Between them, Dot and Linda managed to get her to her feet, and helped her into the autogiro, where she sat on Dot's lap in the passenger's cockpit. Linda started the motor.

"Ever been in a plane before?" asked Dot, as the "Ladybug" taxied.

The girl shook her head.

Linda consulted her map. She did not know where she was, but as she had flown almost directly west from Lake Michigan, she decided to

fly east. If they did not pass another town, they could land at Milwaukee.

It was growing late—they had spent more time on the ground than they had realized, and Linda felt uneasy. If darkness came on before they reached a town, the girl might die before they found a hospital. And besides, Linda's Aunt Emily, who was always worrying about her, would be sure that she had been kidnaped or killed.

The girl in Dot's lap seemed perfectly inert as the time passed, until the sun set. Then she uttered a queer moan.

"Does your head hurt?" asked Dot, in her ear.

"Yes—but that isn't it. I'm—I'm—afraid!"

"Of an airplane? I can assure you that you're with one of the best pilots in the world!"

"Oh, not that! I'm not afraid of flying!"

"What then?"

"Of the dark," she whispered, fearfully. "Of—ghosts!"

Dot looked at the girl as if she were crazy. In these modern times—how had she been brought up? If she were a child of six, it would have been different. She wondered whether she could have understood her correctly, the motor was making so much noise. She bent over and asked her to repeat what she had said.

"Ghosts!" replied the girl. A frightful shiver ran through her whole body, so intense that Dot could feel it in hers. She thought the girl was delirious.

"There's no such thing, my dear," she reassured her, patting the shaking frame.

"Oh, yes, there is! And I mustn't be out alone at night! Never!"

"Put your head on my shoulder, and try to go to sleep," urged Dot, comfortingly. "We'll soon be at the hospital."

But it was not so soon as she hoped. They flew on and on, without seeing any lights that would indicate a city. And all the while the girl continued to sob.

At last, however, they glimpsed bright lights ahead, and Linda flew low enough to read the signs of Milwaukee. She followed a huge beacon light that led to an airport, and brought her autogiro down to earth.

While she wired to her aunt at Green Falls that she and her companion would have to spend the night at Milwaukee, Dot succeeded in finding a taxicab, which they all took to the nearest hospital.

The girl was perfectly conscious when they were

admitted, but when the authorities asked for her name, she still could not give it.

"I don't remember anything," she said; "before these ladies were bending over me on that country road. Except about a ghost that I see and hear at nights."

Dot looked helplessly at the doctor.

"She isn't an idiot, is she, Doctor?" she whispered.

"No, no! It's a case of loss of memory—after concussion. Brought on by that blow on the back of her head."

"But why the ghost?"

"That is some memory that is vivid enough to pierce through the fog which is surrounding her past life. It is a good sign—when one fact remains, the others are more likely to follow."

The nurse was ready to take her to her bed, when the girl uttered a wail that was pitiful to hear.

"Don't leave me!" she begged Linda and Dot. "You are the only friends that I have in this strange world. And in the other world there is that frightful ghost!"

Impulsively, Linda bent down and kissed her affectionately. "You must let the nurse take care

of you now, dear—and be a good girl. We have to get some supper. But we'll be back to-morrow. We promise."

"If that specter doesn't carry me off to-night!"

"He can't carry you away from the hospital," replied the nurse, smilingly. "We never let ghosts into the hospital."

"Never?"

"Absolutely not."

The girl seemed reassured, and Linda and Dot returned to their taxi, to find a hotel where they could spend the night.

"Did you ever hear of anything so queer in all your life?" demanded Dot. "Or anything more pitiful?"

"We'll have to do something, Dot," said Linda, thinking seriously. "We'll buy all the papers to-morrow and look for the names and descriptions of missing persons. We've just got to find that kid's parents."

"If she has any."

"What makes you say that?"

"The way she was dressed. As if nobody in the world cared a bit for her."

"That's sure. But she must live somewhere. She couldn't exist in the woods, on berries, or on that lonely stretch of country where we found her."

"Well, let's try to forget her for the time being," urged Dot. "Here's the hotel, and I certainly am hungry."

"So am I. But I wish we could dress for dinner. Dot, we always ought to carry some extra clothing on these trips, because we never know when we're going to need it."

"Oh, what's the dif, Linda? These suits are becoming, so what do we care?"

They went to their room and took off their sweaters and helmets. When they had washed their faces and combed their hair, they were so presentable that no one even noticed them as they entered the dining room. After all, it was a common sight to see girls in knickers.

The dinner was delicious, and they ate it with great enjoyment, but neither girl could get the accident out of her mind, or the pathetic child—for she seemed like only a child to them, with her strange superstition. So they decided, when they finished their meal, to call two of the Milwaukee newspapers, and to give them the story, with their own names as references.

"And may we print yours and Miss Crowley's pictures, Miss Carlton?" asked the delighted reporter. "We have them on file, you know."

Linda groaned.

"How is that going to help identify this girl?" she demanded. "It's her picture you ought to print."

"We would, if we had it. We'll get it later. But your pictures will call attention to the article. . . . However, we don't wait for permission in a case like this, Miss Carlton. You'll just have to grin and bear it!"

Chapter II

The Lost Girl

When the young girl whom Linda and Dot had rescued opened her eyes in the hospital the following day, it was a strange world which she looked upon. It was as if she had been abruptly transported to another planet, where her name and her past life were forgotten. She remembered her hurt head, and the girls who had come down in the airplane, but her mind was still an utter blank about the days and years that had gone before.

Her forehead throbbed with pain as she tried vainly to think. It was horrible, terrifying, to be stranded in an unfamiliar place like this, without any money in her pockets, without any home to go to after she was well. She pressed her fingers over her eyelids in an effort to bring back something. But one memory only remained—the dreadful vision of a ghost!

Kind as her nurse tried to be, she seemed like only a human machine to this unhappy child, who

waited feverishly for the return of Linda Carlton and Dorothy Crowley—her only friends in the whole world.

About eleven o'clock they came, carrying a bunch of roses and a pile of newspapers. The girl held out her arms in the pathetic appeal of a lost child, and both Linda and Dot kissed her tenderly.

"How's the head this morning?" asked Dot, cheerfully, as she put the flowers into a vase.

"Oh, it's better—but—" She glanced eagerly at the newspapers. "Have you looked at those yet? Has—anybody—reported my loss?"

"I'm afraid not, dear," replied Linda, sympathetically. "Only ourselves. But give them time. If you lived far in the country, as you surely must, they perhaps couldn't reach them. But when they read of the accident, and see the description of you, they're sure to come after you."

"You haven't been able to remember yet who you are?" inquired Dot.

The girl burst into tears; the strain of it all, in her weakened condition, was too much for her.

"No, I haven't," she sobbed.

"Try to think about the house you lived in," suggested Linda. "The room you slept in—the dining room—the garden. Shut your eyes and imagine!"

"When I shut my eyes, all that I can see is that ghost! No, no—I'm afraid of darkness."

"Then try to remember your father or your mother. Their eyes—their smiles—" put in Dot.

"It's no use. Oh, what shall I do? Where can I go after I leave this hospital? I'm—I'm—the most 'alone' person in the whole world!"

"But you still have us! We'll take care of you," offered Dot, impulsively. "We'll take you with us to Green Falls, where we're spending the summer, won't we, Linda?"

"Of course," agreed her companion.

The girl smiled happily, but only for a moment.

"It's wonderful of you—but I can't stay. I'll have to go somewhere soon—and where shall it be?"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Linda brightly. "After you have a visit with us, and get strong, we'll get you some kind of job—taking care of children or something. And you can be studying something to support yourself. Stenography or typing—in case you can't find your parents. How would you like that?"

"Fine! Only I don't know what those words mean—Sten—sten——"

Linda and Dot looked at each other and smiled. What could they do with a girl like this? It was

too much for them to solve the problem alone, but perhaps Miss Carlton could offer a wise suggestion.

The girl stretched out her arms helplessly.

"Oh, I know I'm dumb!" she exclaimed. "But please don't give me up!"

Yet she wasn't stupid, or uneducated, for she used perfect English, and the girls noticed when she ate her lunch, which the attendant brought her on a tray, that her table manners were of the best. She had evidently been brought up correctly by someone.

"We won't!" Linda assured her. "We'll come back for you to-morrow morning, and if the doctor says that you can leave the hospital, we'll take you with us in our airplane." She purposely didn't use the word "autogiro," for fear of confusing her.

"Now get a good rest this afternoon," she added, "and look for us bright and early in the morning."

It was a promise, of course, for Linda and Dot felt as if this young girl was their special responsibility. A most inconvenient promise, however, for it meant remaining another day in Milwaukee.

"Are you sure that you have enough money,

Linda?" asked Dot, as they returned to their hotel for lunch.

"Oh, plenty," was the reply. "That's not what's worrying me. It's Aunt Emily. She won't like it a bit. Still, she wouldn't want us to leave a helpless child. I'll call her up, instead of sending another wire."

"Why not fly home across the lake this afternoon, and come back to-morrow?" suggested Dot.

"For two reasons. One is, I want to give the 'Ladybug' an inspection to-day, and the other is, Aunt Emily might not want us to come back. She might suggest that we just send the girl some money. But that poor little lonely thing needs friendship more than she needs money."

"True. But how shall I put in my time while you go over the 'Ladybug?' "

"Take in a picture show. Or stop back at the hospital. . . . We can do something together tonight."

The afternoon passed all too quickly for Linda at the airport, but when she left at six o'clock, she had the reassurance that her autogiro was in perfect condition. She had taken double precaution this time, for she did not want to run the risk of the slightest mishap with this strange forlorn girl in her care.

Her aunt accepted the explanation which Linda offered that evening over the telephone, interrupting her three times to ask her whether she and Dot were surely all right. Early the next morning the girls sped to the hospital in a taxi, to find their little charge bandaged and dressed, ready for departure.

"We'll fly north along the shore of the lake—or maybe over the water, since you love that, Dot—and land opposite Green Falls for our picnic lunch. Then we'll fly straight across Lake Michigan to home."

"Home!" repeated the little girl wistfully. How wonderful it must be to have a home—a place to go to, where somebody cared for you!

But by the time she and Dot had squeezed into the passenger's cockpit of the autogiro, she was smiling excitedly. She had been too much dazed on the other flight to enjoy it, but now she found it a thrilling adventure. Her head still hurt, but not enough to spoil her delight. How lucky she was, she thought, to have found two wonderful friends like these girls!

"You are not afraid, dear?" shouted Dot, above the noise of the engine.

"Oh, no! I love it!" Her black eyes were shin-

ing, and there was even a faint color in her cheeks.

"You have heard of airplanes before, even if you haven't heard of typewriters, haven't you?"

The girl nodded, with intelligence.

Conversation was difficult, and the girls relapsed into silence, until Linda brought the "Ladybug" down on the western shore of Lake Michigan, presumably opposite Green Falls, where the girls spread out their picnic lunch. Then it seemed as if all three of them wanted to talk at once.

"We've got to get you a name," announced Dot, as she unwrapped the chicken sandwiches which she had secured from the hotel. "If you can't remember your own, we'll have to give you one!"

"Don't you suppose you'd recall it if you heard it?" asked Linda.

"I don't know," replied the girl, dubiously.

"Mary? Elizabeth? Jane?" suggested Dot.

"Dorothy? Elsie? Emma?" added Linda, at random.

But the girl's memory was still a blank.

"Just give me one—anything you like!" she pleaded.

"All right, that'll be fun," agreed Dot, cheerfully. "I always thought it would be more exciting

to name a real person than a doll." She was making an effort to keep up the girl's spirits. "What'll it be, Linda?"

"Amy!" cried the latter. "After Amy Johnson, you know. I think she's the most courageous woman flyer in the whole world to-day! She went from England to Australia all alone, and then went up into Siberia."

"She certainly 'goes places,' " laughed Dot. "I like the name of 'Amy,' too." She turned to the girl. "Does it suit you?"

"Why consult me?" returned the latter, with humor. "Did you ever hear of anybody's being asked about the name she got?"

Linda and Dot both laughed, and Dot gave "Amy" a hug.

"These sandwiches are wonderful!" exclaimed Linda. "Dot, you sure do know how to get good food."

"Wait till you see the caramel cake I wheedled out of that chef at the hotel. He had made it for a special party, but I convinced him he'd have to make another."

"You're marvelous!" cried her chum, admiringly.

Little Amy simply couldn't say anything. She had never tasted food like this before—at least, if

she had, she couldn't remember. She ate daintily, not greedily, for she wanted it to last a long time.

"Amy had better stay with me at Green Falls," decided Linda; "because there's more room at our bungalow." She and her aunt lived alone together, except for occasional visits from her father, who had a business in New York, while Dorothy Crowley was a member of a large family.

"O.K. with me," agreed the latter. Then, turning to Amy, "You'll love Linda's Aunt Emily. She's the most motherly soul."

"You're sure it is all right for me to go with you?" asked the girl, plaintively.

"Of course it is!" Linda assured her.

An hour and a half later, they arrived at the Green Falls Airport, and were surprised to find Ralph Clavering, Linda's most devoted admirer, patiently waiting for them with his car.

"Welcome to our city!" he cried, rushing towards the girls as they climbed out of the autogiro. "Safe and sound!" Then he stopped, surprised at the sight of the queerly-dressed child at their side. He frowned, and muttered to himself, "Look what the cat—or rather, the 'Ladybug'—dragged in!" But aloud he said nothing besides his greeting.

Linda introduced her little friend as "Miss Johnson," and they all got into his car.

"Kidnaped?" inquired Ralph, as he started the engine.

"Who?" replied Linda. "Dot or Amy—or me?"

"Oh, I don't know. I always expect something like that when you don't show up when you're expected— Linda, guess what? I'm getting a plane!"

"An airplane!" repeated Linda, excitedly. "But you weren't to have one till you graduated from college."

"I know. But I convinced Dad I had to have one to follow you around on your wild-goose chases, all over the globe."

"Now, Ralph, don't be silly!"

"It's the honest truth. That's the reason I'm getting one."

Linda blushed; she never could accustom herself to this wealthy young man's obvious devotion. His parents were millionaires, and all his life Ralph had had everything he wanted. Until he met Linda Carlton. He had asked her to marry him as soon as she graduated from High School, but she had refused, saying that such a thing was out of the question until he was through college. Besides, she was too much in love with her "Ladybug" to

be in love with any man. But Ralph went on asking at regular intervals, just the same.

"What kind?" she inquired.

"An autogiro. I'm rather keen on them, and Dad and Mother think they're the safest, so they're rooting for them, too."

"I think that's perfect! And you have your pilot's license, too." Ralph Clavering had taken instructions in flying the same time that Linda had, more to be with her than because he was actually air-minded. But when his father had refused him a plane of his own, he had lost his enthusiasm.

It was only a few minutes' ride from the airport to the Carltons' bungalow. Miss Emily Carlton was waiting anxiously on the porch.

"Linda dear!" she exclaimed, as her niece ran up the steps. "I was so afraid something had happened."

"But I told you everything was all right last night, Aunt Emily!"

"Yes, of course. But you never can tell what may happen in the meantime."

Linda patted her arm reassuringly, and took hold of Amy's hand.

"This is Amy, Aunt Emily—the girl we rescued. We want to go upstairs now, and change our

clothing. I think Amy can wear some of my sports things—they'd be short— And Ralph," she added, turning to the young man, "can't you stay to dinner?"

"No, thank you, I must get back. But there's a dance over at Kit's to-night—may I come and get you?" Kit was his sister, one of the first girls in Linda's group to be married, soon after graduation from High School.

Linda hesitated, and looked inquiringly at Amy. She hated to go off and leave her alone the first night, yet obviously she could not take her.

"Yes, go, Miss Linda," the girl urged her immediately. "I am so tired that I want to go to bed soon after supper."

"O.K. then," agreed Linda, as Dot and Ralph left together, and she hurried upstairs with Amy.

"Don't call me 'Miss Linda,' Amy," she said. "I'm only eighteen. And you must be fourteen, aren't you?"

To her dismay the girl burst into tears.

"I don't know," she said. "I don't know anything—Linda."

"Well, don't worry about it. It'll be all right soon—everything will come back to you."

Amy shuddered.

"Maybe it would be better to forget. I told you

about the ghost—and though there isn't anything else definite, I just have a horror of the past. It's vague——"

"It's the strangest thing the way you seem to use all sorts of words one wouldn't expect of a girl of your age," interrupted her companion, "and then don't know what others mean. Like stenography and typewriting, for instance."

"By the way, what are those things?" asked Amy, wiping away her sudden tears.

"Oh, business terms—I'll explain later. Clothes are more important now. We must hurry with our dressing, and get back to Aunt Emily— Let's see —my tennis dress ought to do——"

It was a white pleated silk, quite short, and fitted Amy nicely. Linda took time to curl the girl's hair, and to put a ribbon around her head, to hide the bandage. She was amazed to see how really attractive the girl was, when she was dressed in becoming clothing.

"The shoes don't fit, but you can wear them for the rest of to-day," she concluded. "To-morrow we'll drive into town—there aren't any stores in Green Falls—and get you some to fit."

"I don't know why you do all this for me, Linda. I never did anything for you!"

"But you would if you could. And we love you,

Amy. Aunt Emily does, too, and you must think of us as your own family, until you find your parents."

Linda was right about her aunt; the motherly woman took Amy right to her heart, and when Linda left with Ralph soon after supper, for dances were informal and began early in Green Falls, Miss Carlton was teaching the young girl parchesi, and they were laughing and chatting like old friends.

Chapter III

Planning the Treasure Hunt

"Who is this Cinderella you brought home, Linda?" asked Ralph, as the young couple started for the party. "You sure fixed her up some since this afternoon."

"She's a girl we picked up in the road," Linda explained. "Didn't Aunt Emily tell you why we were staying over in Milwaukee?"

"No; only that some friend was in the hospital. I didn't get the details. All that I was interested in was when you'd be back."

Briefly, Linda told him the story of the accident and of the girl's loss of memory, adding that "Amy" was a fictitious name which they had given her, until she should recall her own.

"I mean to find her family if I have to search the whole United States!" she concluded.

"And if you have to give up your own summer vacation in the bargain," muttered Ralph, sulkily. "You would, Linda!"

"But it's exciting! Like reading a mystery story, you know."

"You'll get into trouble, I warn you."

"If I do, I'll get out again," she returned, lightly. "I have a charmed life."

"I wouldn't count on that too much if I were you."

"Tell me who will be here to-night," urged Linda, seeing that Ralph was getting irritable over her newest adventure.

"Only half a dozen couples, I believe. Mostly the old crowd—you and Dot and Sue Emery and Sarah Wheeler—and those two married girls Kit is so thick with—Madge Keen and Babs Macy."

"Why don't you tell me which boys?" teased Linda, with a twinkle in her eye. "Don't you think I'm interested?"

"I hoped you weren't. Now that your friend Jackson Carter has gone back South where he belongs, with that fascinating drawl of his, I rather hoped I'd have you to myself."

"Well, I'm going to the party with you!"

"Yes, but that doesn't say it'll be more than two minutes before some fellow cuts in. Why in the name of peace and enjoyment they always invite more fellows than girls to a party is something to make me wonder."

"It's to make us happy—to make us seem popular," explained Linda.

"Nobody has to make *you* seem popular!" he returned, morosely.

"Tell me the boys, Ralph!" she repeated.

"Men, my child—not boys! Why, three of 'em are married. And the rest of us would like to be," he muttered, under his breath.

But he refused to tell her; she'd find out soon enough for herself. Her first discovery, when Ralph stopped his car at his sister's, proved to be one of her oldest friends, Harriman Smith, a young man whom she had not seen for several months. He dashed down the steps to greet her.

"Harry!" she cried, in delight, pressing his hand in genuine pleasure. It was he who had stood by her, believed in her, when nobody else but her chum, Louise Haydock, had thought she could fly the Atlantic Ocean.

"Linda! It's heaven to see you again!" he exclaimed. "Hello, Ralph," he added, shaking hands with her escort. "How's tricks with you?"

"O.K., Harry. When'd you get here?"

"Half an hour ago. By plane."

"You have a plane?" demanded Linda.

"No—be yourself, Linda! I'm a poor working man. No, I came with Kit's husband—Tom Hul-

bert. I have a couple of weeks' vacation, and decided I'd like to spend them with the old crowd. I'm staying with the Hulberts."

Linking arms, all three entered the bungalow together, which was much larger and more luxurious than most of the cottages at Green Falls, for Kit's wealthy father, Mr. Clavering, had presented the young couple with it soon after their marriage. A small orchestra of three pieces had been hired for the dancing, to take the place of the usual radio music, and the large living room was easily able to accommodate twice the number of couples Kit had invited.

As Ralph had surmised, although there were only seven girls, five extra young men had been asked to the party.

Tiny Kit Hulbert, dressed in a fairy-like dance costume of pale-green chiffon, floated over to greet the newcomers.

"I hear you've had another adventure, Linda," she said. So timid herself that she had given up learning to fly after a few feeble attempts, she nevertheless had a great admiration for the other girl's skill and courage.

"It isn't finished yet," replied Linda. "We're in the middle of a mystery. I'll tell you all about

it, Kit, when Ralph isn't around. He's rather fed up."

"I'll say I am. How soon can we dance, Sis?" asked the young man, impatiently.

"Right away," agreed Kit, nodding to the violinist in the corner to start the music.

The supper, served informally on the big porch that evening, was early; for the Hulberts had an exciting piece of news for their guests, and they could hardly wait for the opportunity to tell it. As soon as everybody was seated, Tom Hulbert, who was a lieutenant in the U. S. Flying Corps, and an excellent pilot, called for attention.

"Our next party is going to be a wow!" he began.

"They always are," interrupted Sue Emery, enthusiastically.

Tom bowed. "Thank you, Miss Emery," he said, formally. "But this is absolutely different—entirely new! Kit's father is giving us a treasure hunt. By airplanes!"

"Airplanes!" gasped everybody at once.

Linda's eyes shone with excitement. What a novel idea!

"But most of us can't go!" whined Sue Emery. "We're not pilots!"

"Sure you can. Mr. Clavering's going to rent a lot of planes, so anybody with a pilot's license to fly can enter, and take a passenger. And there's a bully prize— Oh, I'm not going to tell what it is! And a dinner at the end of the hunt—maybe a week-end party!"

"Here's where we girls with licenses score!" cried Dot, triumphantly. "We can do the inviting, for once!"

"As if you didn't always do the picking and choosing!" muttered Ralph. He would have his autogiro by that time, but, of course, Linda Carlton wouldn't go with him. Not an independent young lady like her!

"I'm not worried," drawled Jim Valier, Dot's devoted boy friend, as he reached for his sixth chicken-salad sandwich, although so far he had only eaten one. "Dot's got to take me—and I won't have to do any work. Just share the glory!"

Dot's chin went up in the air.

"I believe I'll ask a girl—they're more reliable," she retorted. "Sue, will you go with me?"

Sue whimpered; she would rather go with a man, but an invitation was an invitation, and she didn't want to be left out.

"I'd hate to be so mean to Jim," she replied. "You better let him go."

"You come with me, Miss Emery," urged Frank Lawlor, the young man who was seated at her right, and who was an experienced flyer.

"Thank you—I'd love to, Mr. Lawlor," she murmured, gratefully.

"When is this exciting event to take place?" asked Harriman Smith, wondering whether he would be there to enjoy it.

"Next Saturday," replied Tom Hulbert. "Entries must be in by Wednesday."

Linda was silent; suppose she were too busy looking up Amy's parents to take part! Oh, but that wouldn't be fair! She simply couldn't miss this. Surely her Aunt Emily would look after Amy.

As if reading her thoughts, Kit asked her whether she would be able to go into it.

"You better stay home, Linda," advised Jim Valier. "So we get a chance at the prize!"

"Don't be silly," she replied. "You'll all probably have speedier planes than my 'Ladybug.' "

The plan was so fascinating that nobody wanted to start dancing again. Instead they sat and talked and talked, until long past midnight. It was after one o'clock when Linda finally reached home—a late hour for an informal party at Green Falls.

Her aunt was waiting up for her, but she did

not seem to be at all worried. As long as the autogiro was in the hangar, Miss Carlton felt safe about Linda.

Ralph left her at the door, and the girl made no mention of the treasure hunt. Instead she inquired about Amy, and asked that she herself be allowed to sleep late the following day.

Remembering the request, Miss Carlton did not call her to the telephone although it rang four times the next morning for Linda, before she was awake. Two impatient young men—Harriman Smith and Ralph Clavering—each called twice to no avail.

Finally, about ten o'clock, Linda put in her appearance at the breakfast table. Miss Carlton and Amy had long since finished theirs, and the little girl was reading a story in the hammock on the porch. Miss Carlton, however, came and sat with her niece as she ate, and gave her the news.

"Which boy are you going to call back, dear?" she asked.

"Neither," laughed Linda, as she complacently ate her cantaloupe. "I haven't time for young men to-day, Aunt Emily."

"You aren't going anywhere in that autogiro, are you?" Try as she did, the older woman could

never keep the note of fear from her voice when an airplane was mentioned.

"No, no, Auntie. It's about Amy. I want to do things for her. And I want your help."

Miss Carlton heaved a sigh of relief. This was a different matter.

"First we must get her some decent clothing. And then don't you think we ought to get her picture to the newspapers, and her description to the radio, so that her people can come and get her?"

"Of course! My, but it is sad, for a child like her to lose her memory. It's bad enough for an older person, but it just seems pitiful for anyone her age."

"Oh, I haven't a doubt but that it will come back," said Linda, hopefully. "The doctor at the hospital said it was probably only temporary, from that blow on her head. Sometimes another blow will restore it, he told me, but, of course, that wouldn't be safe on account of her cut. Publicity is the thing we need now."

"What will you do? Run in to town?"

"No, I don't think that tiny newspaper office would do any good. So I thought if you'd take her and superintend getting the clothing, I'd take my roadster and go on to Grand Rapids."

"Yes, that will suit me perfectly. Only why don't you take Harry or Ralph with you? I'd feel safer, for that's quite a distance."

"All right, Aunt Emily. If either of them comes over in time."

"Either of whom?" demanded a masculine voice from the living room, as the screen door banged.

"Speaking of angels!" returned Linda, turning about to greet Ralph Clavering.

"It's about time you got up, Lazy Betsy!" he teased. "Did your aunt tell you I phoned twice?"

"Yes. Sit down and have some coffee, Ralph. You must have rushed through your breakfast!"

"Rushed! I've been up since eight o'clock!"

"Virtuous soul— But what's on your mind now?"

"The treasure hunt. Dad wants you to help Tom Hulbert and me with the arrangements. It's going to be ticklish business."

"What treasure hunt?" inquired Miss Carlton. She was usually more delighted over Linda's social affairs than the girl herself.

"By airplanes!" replied Ralph, excitedly. "Isn't that a whiz of an idea?"

"Oh, no! No!" gasped Miss Carlton, in terror. "No, Ralph! That is worse than foolhardy! Oh, my boy, you'd all be killed!"

"Not if we plan the thing thoroughly. Start at different places—good fields to land——"

"I beg you not to do it!" she wailed, prophetically. "Think of the tragedy it may bring about! Whose idea was it, Ralph?"

"Dad's—and Kit's."

Miss Carlton shook her head mournfully. "I thought your father had more sense, Ralph. But does your mother approve?"

"Mother's away for a couple of weeks. Went to Bar Harbor to visit Aunt Kate—her sister, you know. So naturally she won't be consulted."

"I can never give my consent to it," stated Miss Carlton, nervously.

"Wait till we get our plans ready. You may change your mind— Now, Linda, can you help me?"

"I'm afraid not to-day, Ralph. I have to do things for Amy. Maybe to-morrow."

"Too late," he said, almost gruffly, as he rose and went to the door. "I might have known you would have your own affairs. Never mind, I'll get Dot!"

Linda went towards him and patted his arm.

"Don't be cross, Ralph. Think of the child's parents. How frantic they must be! I've just got to do something."

"Oh, I suppose you're right. And noble. You always are!"

"I don't see why you bother with anybody you think so holy and righteous," remarked Linda, pulling down the corners of her mouth.

"Now children, don't quarrel," put in Miss Carlton. "You can blame it on me, Ralph. I refuse to let Linda have any part in this absurd treasure hunt."

"Then what's the use of having it?" demanded Ralph.

"Very sensible conclusion," agreed Miss Carlton. "Give it up, and plan a nice picnic instead."

"A nice, old-fashioned one! And take our bicycles?"

"You run along, Ralph," said Linda, "and get Dot and Jim to help you. I really must get ready to go to Grand Rapids!"

So, putting the treasure hunt temporarily from her mind, she ran out to the porch to tell Amy about her plans for the day.

Chapter IV

A Stranger at Green Falls

"Big doings to-day, Amy!" announced Linda, cheerfully, as Ralph Clavering departed. "Come on—get ready!"

"What?" demanded the girl, excitedly. "You haven't heard from anybody who—wants—me?"

Her eagerness was pathetic, and Linda stooped over and kissed her.

"No, there is no news as yet. But we are going to try to make some. I'm going to take your picture and give it to the newspapers."

"Oh, I see!" Plainly, Amy was disappointed. "Do you really think it's any use, Linda? If there were anybody to claim me, wouldn't they have come three days ago?"

"I don't know—not necessarily. Suppose they didn't read the newspapers?"

"If they didn't then, why should they now?" asked Amy, with keen logic.

"Well, their friends might tell them. Besides,

only our pictures—Dot's and mine—were in before, and now we're putting in yours. And we're having it announced over the radio."

"What is a radio?" inquired Amy.

"Come inside and I'll show you. But wait, first let me get these snapshots of you. Stand over there, and look pretty!"

The girl smiled and did as she was told. To her knowledge she had never seen a picture taken before.

"It's funny," remarked Linda, as she took out her roll of films from the camera, "that you remember how to read. You didn't have any trouble understanding that story, did you?"

"Some," confessed the girl. "There were lots of things I hadn't heard of. But I don't think it's my memory, Linda—I think I just never did hear of those things."

"You must have lived in the country," concluded the other. "Somewhere around where we picked you up. I think maybe the best idea of all would be to try to fly back to that spot, and hunt for a house. We'll do that next week, if Aunt Emily is willing."

"Next week! Linda, I feel as if I had no right to stay on and on here——"

"Of course, you have. And you're going to have

a wonderful time to-day. Aunt Emily is taking you into town to buy you some clothes."

"But I can't pay for them!"

"You're not supposed to. They're presents. Like Christmas presents. You've heard of them, I suppose?"

"Yes! Yes!" cried Amy, excitedly. "You hang up your stocking—and—and—sometimes there are cookies——"

Linda's eyes shone.

"You have a memory, Amy! You have! Think some more!"

"I can't," sighed the girl. "That's all."

"But something did come back! Run along and get ready now, for Aunt Emily's waiting—and I must answer that telephone."

The caller proved to be Harriman Smith, and Linda immediately told him of her plans for the day, inviting him to go with her to Grand Rapids.

Harry replied that he could be at the bungalow in five minutes, and he was punctual to the dot. He did not tell Linda that the Hulberts' cars were both out, and that he had run the whole distance.

"I sure am a lucky guy," he said to Linda, as he got into the roadster beside her; "to get ahead of Ralph Clavering like this."

"Oh, Ralph's busy planning the treasure hunt," she replied. "And that reminds me, Harry, if I am allowed to take part in it, will you go as my passenger?"

"I'd be thrilled!" he cried enthusiastically. "But why do you say 'if,' Linda? Surely after you flew the Atlantic Ocean alone, your Aunt Emily couldn't object to a trifle like a treasure hunt?"

"I know; it doesn't seem logical. But don't forget that I flew to Paris before I had all those disasters in the Okefenokee. She's more timid than ever now. And besides, I guess she doesn't like the idea of the hunt—all those planes going to the same place, with the danger of collisions. And some of the flyers are only beginners."

"Who are planning to enter?"

"I haven't heard definitely. But, of course, Ralph and Dot and I will all enter. And there are Tom Hulbert, and Madge Keen's husband, and Frank Lawlor. That's six, at least. I don't know whether there'll be any strangers or not. It's just a Green Falls affair, but I suppose anybody that Mr. Clavering knew could get in all right. I'm going to be dreadfully disappointed if I can't enter."

"You don't really think there's much chance?"

"I'll tell you what I'm counting on, Harry; that Daddy will come home, and he'll tell Aunt Emily

to let me go. You know he's the best sport that ever was; he isn't afraid of taking a few risks."

"And he has a lot of confidence in your flying," added Harry. "That is the trouble with your aunt, I believe. If she had ever gone up with you, and had seen for herself what a marvelous pilot you are, she'd feel differently."

"Thanks, Harry," said Linda, pleased at the compliment, for when Harriman Smith said anything, he meant it. He was not given to idle praise. "I do so wish I could get her to go."

There were so many things to talk about—Linda's summer adventure and her new autogiro; Harry's college course and the job he was holding on the side, that they reached Grand Rapids before they knew it. Harry insisted that they have the pictures developed while they ate their lunch, and wait until afterwards to visit the newspapers.

It was with great difficulty that Linda convinced the city editors that they should publish Amy's pictures instead of her own. But at last she succeeded, and added a description of the man who had been the cause of the accident. Harry visited a broadcasting station at the same time, that the news might be given out over the radio. By three o'clock they were ready to start back to Green Falls.

Not satisfied with merely the day with Linda, Harry tried to date her for the evening.

"Will you go to the tennis matches with me after dinner?" he asked. "At the Club, I mean. You're not in them by any chance?"

"Oh, no, I'm not nearly good enough. I was beaten early in the tournament. But Dot Crowley's in the finals, and so is Jim Valier."

"They always were good. Well, how about it, Linda? I'll get a taxi, if Tom doesn't offer me his car. They'll probably go over in Kit's."

"Thank you, Harry, but I think I better not make any plans until I see what Aunt Emily and Amy are doing. I left them last night—and I want to be with them to-night. So you go with Tom and Kit, and if I can, I'll see you there."

"And promise me at least two dances?"

"Oh, certainly," she agreed.

Fifteen minutes later she parked her car in the garage behind the bungalow, and ran in to see what success Amy and her aunt had had. The girl was dressed in everything new from head to foot; her hair, too, had been cut and waved becomingly. She was dancing around the living room in excited happiness. All her cares were forgotten for the time being, in the joy her new clothing afforded her.

"Don't I look wonderful, Linda?" she cried. "Like a different girl? Miss Carlton has been a real fairy godmother!"

"You certainly do, Amy! Oh, Aunt Emily always knows just the right things to buy!"

The young girl's eyes suddenly grew wistful, and she frowned. "I think, Linda, that I must have been very poor, because I am sure I never had clothes like this before."

"Your clothes were different, dear," Linda admitted. "But you may not have been poor. Perhaps it was only because you lived far out in the country—away from the stores. And maybe your mother didn't know how to sew, or was an invalid——"

"I don't believe I have a mother," replied Amy. "You couldn't forget a mother—like—like your Aunt Emily. No, I feel sure my mother is dead."

"Well, we'll soon solve it all," Linda reassured her, and proceeded to recount to her what she and Harry had accomplished that afternoon.

"Would you like to go to the Club to the tennis matches after dinner, Amy?" she asked.

"What kind of matches?" The girl looked inquiringly at an ash tray on the table.

"Not that kind of matches!" laughed Linda, fol-

lowing her gaze. "You know what tennis is, don't you?"

Amy shook her head, and Linda explained as best she could.

But though the girl knew nothing about the game, she was eager to go to the Club, so that she could display her new clothing. Miss Carlton arranged for an early dinner, and they all decided to drive over in Linda's roadster.

Green Falls was a small resort, and Linda and her aunt knew practically everyone there. As they seated themselves on the wide veranda which overlooked the tournament court, they nodded and smiled to the other spectators on all sides. Dot Crowley came out of the Clubhouse, and stopped to ask Linda to wish her luck, for she was playing against Sarah Wheeler in the girls' finals.

As she left them to take her place on the court, Lt. Hulbert came over to the Carltons, bringing a stranger with him. The visitor was an exceedingly attractive man of perhaps thirty-five, perfectly dressed, obviously a person of wealth and distinction. Linda thought he might be an ambassador, or perhaps a doctor or lawyer.

"Linda," said Tom Hulbert, "I want to present a gentleman who is very anxious to meet you, who has heard of your wonderful exploits, and

who is something of a flyer himself. Miss Carlton, let me introduce Lord Dudley, of England."

Linda blushingly held out her hand, and Tom proceeded to introduce the titled foreigner to Miss Carlton. Not knowing Amy, he did not include her, but he noticed that the man was looking at her.

"I hear your praises sung wherever I go, Miss Carlton," Lord Dudley said, with an engaging smile. "Not only in your own country, but in England, France,—even Germany. You are a very famous person."

"It is very kind of you to say that," replied Linda, embarrassed as usual at the praise. "But tell me about your own flying. Have you your plane here?"

"No, it's being repaired—I left it in England. I drove up here in a hired motor."

"It's too bad you haven't your plane," said Linda. "For we are to have a treasure hunt by airplane on Saturday." She glanced shyly at her aunt, who was frowning. "But you can use one of Mr. Clavering's——"

The tennis matches were to begin immediately, for Dot and Sarah were shaking hands with formality, and the umpire was mounting his stand. So Tom drew his friend away to the seats which Kitty was saving for them.

"I've seen that man before!" cried Amy, excitedly.

"Where? When?" demanded Linda, hopefully. Was another memory coming back?

"I don't know."

"But if he had known you, he would have said something," remarked Miss Carlton. "I was going to introduce you, dear, but I didn't get a chance."

"Oh, that's all right!"

"He looks like Ronald Colman," remarked Linda, after some thought. "Yes, that's it. You've seen him in the movies, Amy."

"What are movies?" asked the girl, to Linda's and Miss Carlton's amazement.

There was no time to explain, for the tennis match had begun, and Linda was anxious not to miss a single play. But all the while she was thinking of the titled Englishman whom she had just met; later in the evening, when the dancing began, she unconsciously searched the room for him. But he had evidently left early, for she did not see him again.

Chapter V

A Flying Engagement

At seven o'clock the following morning, just as the cook was putting on her apron, the door bell of the Carltons' bungalow rang sharply.

"Beggar probably wants his breakfast," the woman muttered, as she slowly went to the door. But there were few beggars at Green Falls, and they always came to the back door.

A blond, freckle-faced young man, without any hat, stood on the porch, grinning shyly. At the gate was the most dilapidated-looking Ford she had ever seen.

"Good morning," he said, briskly, and the cook would never have suspected from his bright, cheery tone that he had been driving all night. "I'm a reporter from the Grand Rapids *Star,* and I want to see Miss Linda Carlton just as soon as possible."

"Miss Linda ain't seein' no more reporters," replied the woman, flatly. "She seen enough a

couple of weeks ago to last her the rest of her life."

"But I want to help her," insisted the young man. "Help her find the lost child's parents."

"Oh! That's different. Come along in, and give me your card."

Smiling happily at his success, the young man entered the living room.

"Had your breakfast?"

"Why—er—I had some coffee in a thermos bottle."

"You could eat some?"

"I'll say I could!"

"All right. Set down there and read the paper while I fix some. I don't want to wake Miss Linda jest yet."

The cook kept him waiting an hour, but she rewarded him with such a breakfast as he could not have bought at the best hotel. The choicest honeydew melon, griddle cakes, home-cooked ham, coffee, and even fried potatoes. It made the young man think of the meals his mother cooked on the farm.

Just as he was finishing his second cup of coffee, Miss Carlton appeared, followed immediately by Linda and Amy.

The boy stood up and flushed a vivid red in a

vain effort to murmur apologies and explanations. It was plain to be seen that he was from the country, and that this was his first newspaper job.

"My name's Michael O'Malley," he finally said, producing a card from his pocket. "And the paper is going to give me a tryout on this story; I can stay as long as I like, provided I get something interesting." He was talking very fast now, almost as if he were afraid to stop, lest Miss Carlton put him out. "You see, I'm crazy about detective stories, and this seems like a chance to do some real sleuthin'. If we can only find the young lady's family, and run down that guy that ran her down!"

Linda smiled. She couldn't help liking the boy; he was so sincere, so earnest, so eager to please.

"Sit down again, Mr. O'Malley," she said; "while we eat our breakfast, we'll talk it over."

"Thank you, Miss Carlton," he breathed, reverently. He treated Linda as if she were some sort of goddess.

"And have some more griddle cakes," urged Miss Carlton, hospitably. She, too, liked the boy.

He grinned.

"You know, they taste exactly like my mother's!" he exclaimed. "I never found anybody who could make 'em like this except her. We lived on a

farm, you see—and there were five boys. And maybe my mother couldn't cook!"

"Now," continued Linda, after her aunt had seen to the boy's wants, "there really isn't a whole lot to do. I'm sure we'll get a phone call from Amy's parents to-day, for they'll be crazy to get her back, and must be watching the papers. The only 'detective' part of the story is to find that man. After all, it probably was only an accident, but still, he ought to be punished."

"What did he look like?"

"Well, you see we were up in the air, and couldn't get a very good look at him. But he wore no hat, and he had an immense amount of gray hair—and, I think, whiskers. I know it seems funny that a man his age should be driving so fast."

"What kind of car was it?" demanded the reporter.

"Gray—and open. But I couldn't tell you the make, or anything more in description. It all happened so quickly, and it shot away before we could really see it."

"You didn't even get the state or the license number?"

"No, of course not."

Mr. O'Malley sighed.

"Looks pretty hopeless. But do you mind if I stick around here to-day till Miss Amy's parents show up? I'd like to be on tap with that much of the story."

"We'll be glad to have you," replied Miss Carlton, hospitably. "Stay until to-morrow if you like, Mr. O'Malley, as our guest."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Carlton!" he answered gratefully. "It—you—make me feel so at home, and I've been kinda homesick in Grand Rapids. And—would you call me 'Mike,' please?"

"Certainly, Mike," agreed his hostess.

"And I'll see that you get the story of our treasure hunt for your paper," added Linda, generously. "A treasure hunt by airplane."

"Gee Whitakers!" cried the boy, enthusiastically. "That is something new!"

Miss Carlton frowned, but said nothing. Amy, too, was silent. She could not be hopeful like the others of hearing from her parents, for she felt sure that there were no parents to hear from.

The telephone rang, and Linda jumped up eagerly, hoping that it meant good news for Amy. To her amazement she heard the fascinating voice of Lord Dudley at the other end of the wire.

"Good morning, Great Aviatrix!" he said. "This is one of your many admirers—Claude Dudley."

Linda flushed; this was going to be more exciting than news of Amy's family.

"Good morning, Lord Dudley," she replied.

"I am going to ask you a big favor, Miss Carlton," he said. "I have to get back to Chicago today, and I was wondering whether you would take me across Lake Michigan in your autogiro. We could lunch at the Lakeside Inn—a place that I know to be particularly charming."

Linda's heart beat rapidly; no young man had ever been able to thrill her like this before. How flattered she was to have him call upon her!

"I'd love to, Lord Dudley," she replied, slowly. "But you must wait until I ask my aunt's permission."

"Well! Well!" he exclaimed, in amazement. "I didn't know modern girls did that any more!"

Linda laughed.

"This girl does. Will you hold the wire, Lord Dudley?"

"Certainly, Miss Carlton. Your favor is well worth waiting for."

Linda put down the telephone and turned to her aunt, repeating the conversation.

"We don't know anything about him," remarked the older woman. "But he seemed like a gentleman. And Tom Hulbert introduced him, so I guess he is all right. If your autogiro is in perfect condition, I suppose I am willing."

Linda turned to her young guest.

"Do you mind if I go off, Amy?" she inquired.

"Not a bit, Linda. I want you to have a good time."

So Linda returned to the telephone and promised to be ready at half-past eleven.

She would not admit to herself how thrilled she was, but she selected her prettiest dress, and was ready for Lord Dudley some minutes before his taxi arrived. She ran out on the porch to meet him.

"We must keep the cab," she said, as she shook hands with him, and noticed that he was even better looking than she had thought, "in order to get to the airport."

"Right," he agreed, giving the necessary directions to the driver.

"Now you must tell me all about yourself, Miss Carlton," he said, as he seated himself beside her in the cab. "I mean the things that haven't been in the papers."

"There really isn't anything to tell," replied Linda, modestly. "I'm just an ordinary girl, with

a high-school education and a year at a ground school, where I earned my transport pilot's license. The only thrilling thing about me is my 'Ladybug'—that's the name of my autogiro."

"I know something more thrilling than any of those things," he said, with his engaging smile. "Something the newspapers have never been able to describe— Your flawless beauty!"

Linda flushed to the lobes of her ears at the compliment; it didn't seem possible that a young man like this, who had been everywhere and met thousands of beautiful girls, could find her so attractive. Yet there was a note of sincerity in his low, deep voice that prevented any doubt.

"I wish you would tell me about yourself, instead," she urged, anxious to change the subject. "About your family in England, and how you happened to come to America."

"There isn't much to tell about that, either," he replied. "There is an old castle at home, but I'm afraid it wouldn't interest you. It's so run down. It needs lots of money spent on it. My father is an old man, and it has been the dream of his life to see the castle in good order again, with the gardens well kept, as they were in years gone by. So I have come to America to try to make some money."

The smile which was usually on Lord Dudley's lips had vanished, and his eyes grew wistful. What a wonderful man he was, Linda thought, to put his father's wishes above everything else!

"Here is the airport, Lord Dudley," she announced. "We'll have to postpone our conversation until we get to the tea room. You can't talk in an autogiro."

"No; I realize that. But how interesting it will be. I have heard of Cierva, the inventor, in England, and I even saw him once on one of my trips to Spain, but I have never flown in an autogiro."

"You'll get the thrill of your life!" Linda promised.

"I got the thrill of my life last night," he said, and Linda could not help knowing that he was referring to his meeting her.

She gave the "Ladybug" a hasty inspection, although the head mechanic at the airport assured her that it was in perfect condition. Lord Dudley shouted his admiration of its quick take-off into the air, and settled himself comfortably for the beautiful flight over the lake. Linda, too, found the trip delightful; in the dreamy mood that she was experiencing, she was almost glad that they could not talk. Was it possible, she wondered, that at last she had fallen in love?

As Lord Dudley had promised, the Inn was charming, and the luncheon excellent. Linda was sorry when it was over, for it meant parting from her fascinating companion.

"I can never thank you enough, Miss Carlton," he said in a low tone, as he took her hand into both of his for a moment. "And—may I come back again?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" she answered, with eagerness.

"When I do come back, I—I—will just have to ask you something—Linda, my dear. I know I shouldn't—I am a poor man—but—" He hesitated, and leaning over, pressed a kiss on her hand. Then, without another word, he put her into her autogiro.

Her heart in a turmoil, Linda mechanically started her motor and flew away. Lord Dudley's meaning was clear, but what was the answer? Could she possibly decide so quickly whether she loved him or not, whether she was ready to give up everyone else for his sake, even her own country, to cast her lot with his? It was too much to think about; she was thankful when she reached home to be able to put the question aside in favor of Amy's problems.

She ran up the steps hopefully, wondering whether there was any news, and she found Amy and Mike in their bathing suits and rain coats, all ready for a swim.

"Haven't you heard anything?" she demanded eagerly. "No phone calls?"

"Only from other reporters," sighed Mike, and Amy suddenly burst out crying.

"I must be an orphan," she sobbed. "That is why you and Miss Emily seem so wonderful to me, Linda. I am sure that I never knew anybody like you in my past life."

"Don't give up yet, dear. If you had been in an orphan asylum, the authorities would have claimed you long ago. Maybe your family is poor, and can't get the money immediately. Please don't cry—you don't have to make a pool of tears like Alice in Wonderland to swim in. There's a marvelous lake this side of the falls!"

"Alice in Wonderland!" repeated Amy, slowly. "I've heard of her."

"Of course you have. I'll hunt up a copy of the book, and see what it recalls to you. Now if you wait five minutes for me, I'll get into my bathing suit and go along with you!"

Fifteen minutes later the three young people

parked the roadster at the shore of the lake, and joined the others in bathing. Linda introduced both Mike and Amy to everybody, so that the strangers felt quite at home.

Ralph Clavering immediately took possession of Linda.

"Where were you to-day?" he demanded. "I expected you to play tennis with me."

"I thought you were angry at me, Ralph," she returned, demurely.

"I was, but the worst part of it all is, I can never stay angry. Are you going to enter the treasure hunt?"

"I sort of hope so. Aunt Emily hasn't said anything against it lately, and I was flying to-day."

"Flying! Where?"

"Across Lake Michigan."

"Alone?" This jealous young man always felt that he had a right to know of all Linda's engagements.

"No; I took Lord Dudley across." She tried to keep her tone matter-of-fact.

"How you girls fall for titles!" he almost sneered. "I don't like the man."

"Men never do admire handsome men," Linda answered, slyly.

"If you call him handsome!— Well, you have to give us to-morrow. Kit's expecting you to lunch."

"O.K.," agreed the girl, disappearing with a swan dive into the lake.

Chapter VI

The Telegram

"I HEAR you have made a new conquest, Linda!"

Tiny Kitty Hulbert, Ralph Clavering's married sister, sat on the edge of the diving board the following morning and talked to Linda, who was watching the newspaper reporter, Mike O'Malley, trying to teach Amy to swim. But the young girl was terribly frightened, and was not making progress.

Linda blushed and smiled.

"I wouldn't say that, exactly——"

"But it's true," said Kitty. "I never saw anybody more thrilled than Lord Dudley. He thinks you're just about perfect."

"When did you see him?" asked Linda, trying to keep her voice calm. This was Wednesday, the day after her flight across the lake, and incidentally the last day for the contestants to register for the treasure hunt.

"Oh, we haven't seen him since you did yester-

day," returned Kitty. "But I heard about the flight before he left, and he seemed awfully excited. Just like a kid of sixteen, in love for the first time."

Linda blushed; so other people had noticed it, too! She wondered if it would be the talk of Green Falls.

"Have you known him long, Kit?" she inquired.

"No. One of Tom's friends—John Kuhns—met him in a railroad station, just after he had landed from England, and he seemed so sort of lost and lonely that he entertained him. His family liked him so much that they invited him to their summer place, and then suddenly changed their plans and went abroad instead. So John asked Tom to look out for him, and that is how we happen to be entertaining him at Green Falls. I was kind of scared at the idea of royalty, but he seems just like anybody else."

"I wonder how old he is," mused Linda, more to herself than to Kitty.

"Too old for you, dear," replied Kitty. She knew how much Ralph cared for Linda, and she hated to see him suddenly cut out by a foreigner with a title, charming as Lord Dudley was. "You're not serious about him are you, Linda?"

"Oh, I like him," replied the other. "I guess

all the girls do— By the way, Ralph invited me to your house to lunch to-day. Is that right?"

"Yes indeed, I'm expecting you. And you know it's the last chance to register for the hunt. You're entering, aren't you?"

"I hope to. I'm going to pin Aunt Emily to a definite answer before I come over to-day. I must go in now, Kitty, for I see that Amy is tired of swimming. She'll want to go home in a minute."

"Haven't her parents turned up yet?"

"No, they hadn't when we left."

"It seems queer."

"Yes, it does. I'm really worried about her now. If she could only remember!"

"Well, as long as your Aunt Emily is taking care of her, she'll be all right. Now go along— get your swim, and I'll see you at one o'clock."

Linda dived into the water, but she did not swim long. Amy was standing still, up to her neck, clinging nervously to Mike's hands. Though the sun and the air were warm, she seemed to be shaking all over.

"Miss Amy's scared to death," announced Mike. "She acts like a person who has never gotten over a drowning scare." He turned to the girl. "Have you ever been drowned, Miss Amy?"

The girl burst out laughing at the absurdity of the question, and seemed her normal self again. But she was glad that Linda suggested that they all go home.

They entered the house with the usual hope, a hope which was gradually dying now, of hearing from Amy's family. But Miss Carlton had to tell them again that no one except her own friends had telephoned. Linda hurried off to dress for the luncheon at Kit's.

"Where are you going, dear?" Miss Carlton asked her, half an hour later, when her niece appeared in a new dress, a flowered chiffon, which she would hardly have worn for lunch at home by themselves.

"I'm going to Kitty's, Aunt Emily. To help plan for the treasure hunt. You—you don't mind if I take part in it, do you? I have to let them know to-day."

Miss Carlton sighed.

"I suppose it would be unreasonable to try to keep you out," she admitted. "But I am so afraid of crashes with other planes. It is just like driving a car—much safer where there is no other traffic, for you never can tell what the other people will do."

"I know. But I'll be careful, Aunt Emily. And Ralph and Kitty are so anxious for me to go into it."

Miss Carlton weakened; as usual the mention of the Claverings had a softening effect upon her. She liked Linda to be with them, to take part in the social affairs of her young friends.

"All right, dear. I agree, though I really don't approve."

Linda kissed her.

"But you never do approve, even if I only go up in the air for half an hour," she teased.

"I thought I was growing used to it, till those awful things happened to you in the Okefenokee Swamp."

"But it was thieves, not airplanes, that caused all the trouble. It might have happened if I had been riding horseback."

"True. Have your own way, dear." But Linda could tell by her voice that she wasn't angry.

Ten minutes later Linda parked her roadster in front of Kit's bungalow and ran up the porch with the good news. Kit and Dot, Ralph and Mr. Clavering were all sitting on the big couch hammock, poring over a map.

"We have to fly over Lake Michigan!" announced Dot, proudly. "Isn't that marvelous?"

"Perfect," agreed Linda, glad that this hunt was not to be a "play" flight of a few miles or so. A hundred miles as a beginning—that ought to be thrilling.

"The first landing is to be the Milwaukee airport," said Mr. Clavering. "That is all I am going to tell you. The seven planes are to leave Green Falls at ten o'clock Saturday morning."

"Seven?" repeated Linda. "Who are the seven?"

Fumbling in his pocket, Ralph produced a typewritten list. He read it aloud.

"1. Tom and Kitty Hulbert.

"2. Dot Crowley and Jim Valier——"

"So you're taking Jim after all!" interrupted Kit. "I thought you said he was too lazy."

Dot smiled.

"I guess I was only teasing," she admitted.

"To continue," said Ralph.

"3. Bert and Madge Keen.

"4. Frank Lawlor and Sue Emery.

"5. Joe Elliston and Sarah Wheeler——"

"Joe Elliston!" cried Linda. "Since when has he become a flyer?"

"He just received his private pilot's license last week," explained Ralph. "He hasn't a plane of his own, but Dad's renting one for him."

"I guess I'm taking a chance," remarked Mr. Clavering. "But the plane's insured."

"And you and I are the sixth and seventh, Linda," concluded Ralph. "May I ask who your passenger is to be?"

"If you tell me who yours is," she countered. "I am going alone."

"Oh, I see. Well, I'm taking Harry."

"Not Lord Dudley?" inquired the young man, with a gleam of jealousy.

"Oh, no. I promised Harry."

"Lord Dudley thinks he's going with you," remarked Kitty. "He expects to be back."

"Then why doesn't he take a plane and enter," sneered Ralph. "I'll bet he's not so much of a flyer as he makes out to be."

"How you love him!" remarked Kitty, rising to greet Madge Keen, who was the last of her guests to arrive.

"Now come to luncheon," added the young hostess, with a nod to the maid who was waiting for the signal. "You must all be starved after your swims."

A simple affair like this was always a party at Kitty Hulbert's, for the young matron had such beautiful things, such lovely flowers, such trained servants that she enjoyed displaying them. The

table was arranged as elaborately as if a banquet were being served.

As usual, Linda found herself seated next to Ralph, and she began to talk to him immediately, to take his mind away from the subject of Lord Dudley.

"Has your autogiro come yet?" she inquired.

"No, but it'll be here to-morrow. Want to go up on a test flight with me, Linda?"

"Of course I do!" she replied eagerly. "I think it's wonderful that you're getting it, before you even graduated from college."

"Now Linda, don't rub it in," replied the young man. Although he should have completed his course at Harvard the preceding June, there had been a condition in mathematics, which kept him from getting his degree. His father had wanted him to go to summer school, but with his usual lazy attitude towards life, Ralph had refused. He was just as well satisfied that he did have to return in the fall; it would be more fun to hang around college than to buckle down to his father's business.

"I didn't want to be mean," apologized Linda. "Only you know you weren't supposed to get a plane of your own till you graduated."

She stopped talking; Kitty was taking a tele-

gram from the maid, and glancing at Linda. What was it? For her? News of Amy—or a message from her father?

"This is for you, Linda," said her hostess. "I do hope it isn't bad news."

"Maybe it's something about Amy," she said expectantly, and all eyes were on her as she slit open the envelope.

But as she read the message, a vivid blush spread over her face, and she felt as if the others about the table must know what it contained.

"Am returning to-night with Tom for my answer. Love. Claude."

"Why Linda! What's happened?" demanded Dot, in surprise.

"Nothing, nothing," she murmured, in confusion. "Nothing's wrong. It's—just a personal message."

"Not about Amy?"

"No."

There was an embarrassed silence, and Kitty came to the rescue by leading the conversation back to the subject of the treasure hunt.

"I'm allowed to tell you this much about it," she added. "Everybody flies to Lake Winnebago after the hunt for a big celebration. Dad's rented

an entire Inn for the week-end, and all our parents are invited to be chaperons."

"And will the prize be awarded then?" asked Dot, more to keep the conversation away from Linda than because she wanted to know.

"No. The lucky pilot finds the prize for himself—after following the directions he receives."

"You better say 'she,' " remarked Ralph, "for I think it's a great deal more likely that Linda or Dot will get it, than any of us fellows."

Linda forced a smile, but her mind was not on the conversation. Even the treasure hunt had lost its interest; she longed to get home, where she could be alone to think things out.

The party broke up at last, and she managed to get away without even an explanation to Dot of the mysterious contents of the telegram.

She paused in the living room of her own bungalow only long enough to give Mike O'Malley the facts and the names of the contestants in the hunt, for the young man was returning to Grand Rapids. With a sigh of relief, she rushed up to her own room, and locked the door, there to try to come to some decision.

But the conclusion she came to was not at all to Lord Dudley's liking, as he learned to his dismay

after supper, when he came over to take her canoeing.

"My plan is this, Linda dear," he said, as they pushed off from the shore: "Take me as your passenger in the hunt on Saturday—win the prize, as, of course, you will—and instead of returning, simply elope in the autogiro. We can wire your aunt from the nearest city, wherever that happens to be, when we are married. Doesn't the romance of that appeal to you?" he asked, rapturously.

Linda slowly shook her head.

"I couldn't, Lord Dudley——" she began.

"Please call me 'Claude!' " he pleaded.

She smiled.

"Well, then—Claude—I couldn't. First of all, I've promised to take Harriman Smith on the flight——"

"Shucks!" he interrupted, abandoning his usual dignity.

"And besides, I couldn't be so mean to Aunt Emily. She would hate it—and she'd have a right to. No, Claude, I'm not willing to marry you on so short an acquaintance. A year from now—or possibly six months—I don't know."

The man stopped paddling and regarded her helplessly.

"It's because I've told you I'm only a poor man," he said, thinking immediately that money had something to do with her refusal. "And you're an heiress!"

Linda opened her eyes wide in amazement.

"What makes you think I'm an heiress, Lord Dudley?" she asked, forgetting to use his first name. "Really—we're not rich."

"But the newspapers said you were. And that big prize you won, flying the Atlantic alone——"

The man's surprise was evidently as great as Linda's.

"Yes, I have that—invested in bonds. But $25,000 isn't a fortune. And I haven't anything else, except the money I sold my Bellanca for, which Daddy put into a trust fund for me, in case his business fails. No, Lord Dudley, I really expect to earn my own living."

"I see," he replied, and he could not keep the bitter disappointment out of his tone. "That is why we had better not risk it?"

He seemed content to leave it at that, and Linda was silent. As a matter of fact, money had never entered into her consideration of the marriage. The idea of leaving her aunt, her friends—especially Harry and Dot, and even Ralph—to go to a

strange country had been a much more vital drawback. Charming as he was, Lord Dudley was only a stranger.

"Let's forget it, and talk about something else," she suggested, quietly. "Tell me why you don't go into the treasure hunt yourself. It's going to be lots of fun."

"I'm too busy," he replied irritably, as one might speak to a child. "I have to get back to Chicago early to-morrow morning."

"In that case," concluded Linda, "hadn't we better paddle back home now?"

Without any reply the Englishman turned the canoe about and silently made for the shore. It was only half-past nine when he left her at the steps of her bungalow, refusing her invitation to come in to see her Aunt Emily.

"And that is the end of him," Linda thought as she went quickly to bed, little imagining that she would ever see him again.

Chapter VII

The Widow in Black

"Linda, it's come! My autogiro!" shrieked Ralph Clavering, bursting into the Carltons' bungalow, without even waiting to knock. "And I've had her up already! The man gave me a lesson!"

Linda almost fell down the steps in her wild excitement at this piece of news. Another autogiro in Green Falls! Her "Ladybug's" twin!

"Wonderful! Great!" she cried, seizing both his hands and executing a dance. "In plenty of time for the treasure hunt."

"Yes. Don't forget that you promised to go up with me this afternoon!"

"Try and keep me out!" she replied. "I just can't wait. I don't even care about lunch, if you'll just give me time to get into my flying suit——"

"What's this? What's this?" demanded Miss Emily Carlton, entering the living room with Amy at her heels. "You're not going to go without your lunch, Linda!"

"Then may we have ours right away?" pleaded her niece. "Ralph and I, I mean?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Only do be careful, Linda, with a new plane. Are you quite sure all the parts are there?"

Ralph smiled.

"The autogiro couldn't have arrived safely, Miss Carlton, if it hadn't been perfect. You see they don't deliver planes in trucks—they fly 'em!"

"All right, then," agreed the older woman, grudgingly. "Then I'll go and see about lunch."

It was a thrilling afternoon for Linda, and even more pleasant for Ralph, in the possession of his first flying machine. Together they went over to the airport and took the new autogiro into the skies, first with Linda, then with Ralph at the controls. In the joy of flying Linda forgot for the time being all about the queer experience of the preceding day with Lord Dudley. She was Linda Carlton the aviatrix to-day, interested in nothing but aviation.

She even forgot about Amy until she returned to the bungalow at supper-time, and found the little girl waiting wistfully on the porch all alone. Linda knew from her expression that no one had telephoned.

"Nobody cares about me except the newspaper

reporters," she remarked the following day—the Friday before the treasure hunt—when still nothing had happened, and no one had come to claim her. "And even they are beginning to lose interest."

"Not Mike O'Malley!" replied Linda, cheerfully. "I had a letter from him to-day—he's arriving this morning. He expects to drive that battered Ford of his over to Lake Winnebago, to be in at the finish of the hunt."

Amy sighed; she had not been included in the plans for the event, although Miss Carlton had been invited for the week-end at the Inn. The girl would have to be left in care of Anna, Miss Carlton's competent cook.

"I wish Mike would stay here with me," said the girl. She didn't add that she would be lonely; it wouldn't be grateful to these wonderful people who were doing so much for her.

"Mike has work to do for his paper," replied Linda.

Scarcely had she finished the sentence when the Ford stopped at the gate, and the young man, sunburned and grinning, jumped out. He felt almost as if he were coming home, to be back again at the Carltons'.

"Hello, everybody!" he cried merrily. "Here I am—all ready for the big hunt!"

"It's more than I am," replied Linda. "I've got to spend the whole day going over the 'Ladybug.' But come on in, Mike—I'll get you something to eat. Of course, you're hungry?"

"You said it!"

"And as soon as you finish eating, you better take Amy swimming. Aunt Emily went shopping, and I have to go to the airport, so I'll be glad if you can keep Amy from being lonely."

"O.K. with me," he agreed, following Linda into the dining room. "By the way, Miss Carlton, any change in plans, or contestants, for the treasure hunt?"

"Not that I know of," she replied, as she hunted some buns and milk for the boy, who ate hungrily, as usual.

Suddenly he stopped eating, and peering towards the living room, listened intently.

"Do my ears deceive me, or is somebody snitching my Lizzie?" He jumped up and ran to the living-room window.

"No, I think that's the station taxicab," replied Linda. "Its engine sounds like a boiler factory."

"Almost as loud as an airplane's!" teased Mike.

"Who is it, Linda? Who is that getting out of the cab?" demanded Amy holding the other girl's arm tensely. "Do you know her?"

"No," replied Linda, as she watched a woman in black who was coming up the porch steps. "She's a stranger to me—oh—maybe—Amy, do you remember her?" She peered anxiously into the younger girl's face.

The latter shook her head sorrowfully.

"No, I don't. Not a glimmer—not even a vague memory, like I had when I saw that man at the tennis matches."

"What man?"

"Lord Somebody——"

"Oh! Lord Dudley. But you saw him afterwards. He was here——"

"No, I never happened to be around. And I couldn't remember anything about him anyway. But I feel positive I never saw this woman."

The girls were standing close together, Amy still clinging to Linda's arm, when Mike opened the screen door to the stranger's knock.

The woman hesitated a moment, and stepped inside, looking quickly about the room. With a bright smile of recognition, she came over to Amy.

"Helen darling!" she exclaimed, pushing Linda

aside and kissing Amy gushingly. "Oh, I'm so thankful to have you safe!"

Tears came to Amy's eyes, but she conld not pretend that she remembered the woman.

"Who—are you?" she stammered.

The woman looked shocked.

"Helen! Can't you remember me? I am your Aunt Elsie—I've cared for you ever since your mother died. Oh, surely, dear—" She looked helplessly at Linda.

"Helen—we call her 'Amy' has lost her memory," explained the latter. "You see she was hit on the back of the head by a car. But surely you read about it in the papers?"

"Yes, yes. But I thought that she would recognize me," wailed the woman hysterically, wiping tears from her eyes. "She disappeared about two weeks ago—we live in a little town in Montana—and I was almost crazy with fear. Then I read about this girl being hit by something—it was an airplane, wasn't it?—and I came on to Grand Rapids, and a newspaper man there showed me the picture."

Mike swelled with pride. That must have been his newspaper!

"It was a car she was hit by," corrected Linda. "An airplane rescued her."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the woman. "I heard it the other way about. Well, we'll prove that later. Now, come along, Helen."

But anxious as the girl had been for people of her own to claim her, now that this stranger had done so, she was afraid to go. She did not like the woman.

"What is my other name?" she questioned, without making any move to obey her.

"Tower—Helen Tower. I am Mrs. Fishberry. Can't you possibly remember, dear?"

The girl shook her head.

"Couldn't I stay here a little longer—Mrs. Fishberry?" she asked.

"Certainly not." The woman looked annoyed.

Amy clung to Linda, her whole frame shaking violently.

"She must have been unkind to me before," she sobbed. "You know I felt that there was something to be afraid of in my past life. Oh, Linda, please keep me till that doctor who is treating me can make me well! I'll work and repay all you do for me!"

"Of course, we'll be glad to, Amy, dear," replied Linda, reassuringly. "Just so long as you're content to stay!"

"That is impossible," interrupted Mrs. Fish-

berry. "I cannot allow it for a minute, and will bring legal proceedings if you try to steal this child! Come, Helen—the taxi's waited long enough!"

Reluctantly Amy started to obey, when Mike O'Malley stepped forward and held up his hand like a traffic cop.

"Just a minute! Just a minute!" he said.

All eyes turned towards him instantly.

"You spoke of legal proceedings, Mrs. Fish-market, or whatever your name is—what legal proofs have you that the girl belongs to you?"

The woman winced in surprise, and Amy and Linda looked at Mike with admiration. How clever of him to think of that!

The stranger drew herself up haughtily.

"I confess I did not bring legal proofs," she said. "I thought that after sacrificing the best years of my life to bringing up Helen, that she would know me, and want to come to me. But it seems that I cannot expect love or gratitude."

"Well, you can't expect us to turn her over to a person she dislikes, unless that person has a right to her," returned Linda.

"Very well," concluded the other. "I'll go. But I'll be back with the proofs. And you are

going to be sorry for your insolence, Miss Linda Carlton!"

With this final remark, she turned and left the house.

"Whew!" exclaimed Mike, wiping his forehead. "She's a hot one. But I think there's something fishy about her, besides her name. I don't believe she's your aunt at all, Helen."

"Don't call me that!" pleaded the girl. "That name means nothing to me, and I am used to being called 'Amy' now."

"All right, dear," agreed Linda. "Now don't think any more about it. You'll be my adopted sister, for as long as you like—" She turned to the boy, "Mike, you are a bright man—I certainly am thankful we had you here!"

The young man blushed vividly over his freckles, and suggested that they go on with their swim as they had planned.

Drying her eyes, Amy ran off to get into her suit, but Linda remained some minutes where she was, thinking. It was queer—terribly queer. The woman was so unlike Amy, so different a type, so common—so really vulgar. Yet Amy was one of the sweetest, most refined little girls Linda had ever met; she might almost have been brought up

by her own Aunt Emily, from the training she showed. Yet if the woman weren't a relation what could she possibly want with Amy? The child was obviously poor; what could be the reason, unless it were love?

Linda sighed; the problem was too much for her. So, as she often did with other difficulties, she put it aside while she flung herself wholeheartedly into the inspection of her autogiro.

Dressed in overalls, and covered with grease, but satisfied that her afternoon's work had been worthwhile, she returned to the house just in time for supper. She parked her roadster in the garage and dashed into the house, hoping to be able to get to her own room to dress before anyone saw her. But she was unsuccessful; Harriman Smith was waiting for her in the living room.

"Hello, Harry!" she exclaimed, laughing. "Don't look at me! I'm a sight. But if you'll just give me fifteen minutes——"

"You look fine, Linda!" protested the boy, thinking that her blue overalls were becoming and that her hair was all the more attractive when it blew around her face. "You see," he continued, talking rapidly, "I'm in a hurry. I'm here because I have bad news—at least bad for me, though it will be good news for some other lucky fellow.

I have to go back to work to-night, and that means I can't go in the treasure hunt with you to-morrow."

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Harry!" she exclaimed, with genuine regret.

"Another fellow in the company got sick, and so they just had to recall me," he explained. "I shouldn't have cared so much if it had happened Monday, but I was looking forward to this affair a great deal."

"I'm awfully disappointed, too," said Linda, wondering whether she would go alone or ask somebody else.

"Thanks, Linda—I really appreciate that. When there is a whole stag line just dying for the honor— But Linda, may I ask a favor?"

"Why, yes, certainly, Harry."

"Don't take Lord What's-his-name in my place. Anybody but him!"

"Why?" asked Linda in surprise, not that she had the slightest idea of doing any such thing, but because she wanted to know Harry's reason. Unlike Ralph Clavering, Harriman Smith never stooped to petty jealousy.

"Well—I want to be fair, but—there's something slimy about that man."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, he's too smooth. None of us fellows like him. It's not because he's an Englishman—I've known several of them, and thought them O.K., but—well—he just doesn't click with me. So will you take somebody else?"

Linda smiled.

"I wouldn't take Lord Dudley anyway, Harry, because he has gone away," she replied. "But I really think you're unfair about him. It's because he's a lot older than all you boys that he seems so different. He's halfway between us and our parents. That sort of makes him a different generation."

"You do like him, don't you, Linda?" persisted the young man, keeping his eyes fastened on her, fearing her answer.

Linda shrugged her shoulders.

"You needn't worry, Harry," she said. She was silent a moment, thinking of something different. "I know what I'll do!" she cried. "I'll take Amy with me!"

"Amy!"

"Yes. The kid is crazy about planes. She's afraid of a lot of things, like the water, and the dark, and a strange woman who came here to-day, but she adores flying. And she hates to be left alone."

"Well, that's O.K. with me!" exclaimed Harry, with a sigh of relief. It was better than he had expected. "Now I must say good-by, Linda. I just have time to get supper and catch my train."

Linda hurried into her bath as soon as the young man left, and in half an hour she was ready for supper, when she told Amy her good fortune about being included in the hunt. The girl was so delighted that she almost forgot the unpleasant experience of the morning. But Miss Carlton, who had listened gravely to the story when she returned from her shopping trip, was worried.

Chapter VIII

Amy's Relatives

The day after Mrs. Fishberry's visit to the Carlton bungalow, the woman stepped off the train at Chicago and took a taxicab to an apartment house in the center of that city. Ringing the bell three times, she was finally admitted by a man about her own age.

"Hello, Ed," was her greeting.

"Well, Elsie," he said, questioningly, as she drew off her gloves and seated herself in a large leather chair. The apartment was obviously that of a bachelor, furnished by the hotel, in a style that one would expect to appeal to a man.

"Did you see the kid?" he asked, as he lighted a cigarette.

"Yeah. But she didn't like me. Claimed she never saw me before, and that I'm not her real aunt."

"Well, of course, you aren't," he observed, in a matter of fact tone.

"No, but I will be soon—when you and I are married. You're surely her uncle, aren't you?"

"Yeah. No doubt about that."

"Well, then——"

"We won't be married till we make sure we get the money!" he announced, firmly.

The woman looked sulky.

"You've got the money, haven't you?" she demanded. "The girl's father is dead, isn't he?"

"Listen, Elsie," he said, irritably. "I've told you about this before, but you can't seem to get it through your thick head. There were two of us boys, and the old man. My mother died young. Well, I was supposed to be a 'bad egg,' but my brother was everything my father admired. That's the kid's father, you see. He married early, but soon after the child was born he and his wife were killed in an automobile accident. So, of course, Dad—the kid's grandfather—took her to raise."

"But I've heard all that!" interrupted Mrs. Fishberry.

"Sure you have. But you don't understand about the old man's money. It seems he left a will hidden in the house, and nobody could find it. And I happen to know that he meant all his money to go to the kid, and not a cent to me."

He smiled, in a way that was always fascinating

to women, and Elsie Fishberry smiled, too. How clever he was!

"Lucky thing for me," he continued, "that the will was lost! I might have had to work all these years!"

"Well, you got the money!" she concluded, happily. "So it beats me why you want more, when the old man left a hundred thousand dollars!"

Ed frowned impatiently.

"I tell you I haven't got it, Elsie! Why can't you believe me?"

"Then how is it that you live in luxury while that kid and her nurse almost starved in that old house?"

"Because a Trust Company still keeps charge of the bonds. They won't hand 'em over to me till the girl dies, or till the old man's will is found. But they give me the income, and I'm supposed to let the nurse have some of it to take care of the kid."

The woman laughed harshly.

"Did you ever give her a cent?"

"Yes. You'd be surprised. I visited the old place two or three times and gave the woman five dollars. Once the kid almost drowned in the Fox River, when I was there."

"I guess you didn't do anything to save her!" laughed Mrs. Fishberry.

"No, I can't say that I did. It would have been easier for me if she had died. But a couple of boys happened along and fished her out."

"Didn't she yell for help?"

"Sure. But I pretended I was deaf. And that nurse really is deaf—she's so old. About eighty, I figured. She took care of me and my brother—the kid's father—when we were children."

"And where is that nurse now?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Maybe at home—maybe out looking for the kid."

"That reminds me what I specially wanted to tell you," remarked Mrs. Fishberry. "So long as they won't believe I'm the child's aunt—they call her 'Amy,' you know—we've got to dig up some pictures and records to prove it."

"You mean *you've* got to dig them up—at the old house," corrected Ed. "I'm not going near the place till Monday, and then I'm going to set it on fire."

"Set it on fire!" exclaimed the other, in horror.

"Sure. If the Trust Company knows that the place is burned, they will give up all hope of finding the will, and hand out the old man's bonds to

me. After all, I'm the real heir. I'm the son, and this kid is only a granddaughter, even if Dad did like her better than me."

"You're a wise one," remarked Mrs. Fishberry, with admiration. "But suppose that old nurse happens to be inside—and catches you?"

"I've thought of that. I'm going disguised as an old man, and I expect to work at night, anyway. Don't worry, Elsie—I'm not going to bungle this— But you get those pictures before Monday—they ought to be in the family Bible and the album on the parlor table. I'll map out the directions how to get to the house."

"Suppose the nurse is there?"

"If she is, don't say anything about the kid. Just tell her that I sent you for the stuff. After all, I've got a right to 'em."

"And if she isn't there, how'll I get in?"

"I'll give you my key."

The woman was silent for a moment, thinking rapidly.

"Listen, Ed," she said, finally, "if you're going to get all that money in bonds from your father's estate, let's give up this other scheme. It's not worth it."

The man jumped up angrily.

"Not worth it!" he snarled, and his face was

far from attractive now. "Not worth it for twenty-five thousand dollars!"

"We may not get it," she whimpered.

"Oh, yeah? Well, if we don't, it'll be your fault! Because you balled up the works. Listen, Elsie, did you do what I asked when you were at the Carltons'? Suggest that you believed it was Linda Carlton hit the kid with her autogiro, and not a car?"

"Yeah. I did. But I don't believe they hardly took it in."

"Linda Carlton'll take it in when we sue her for damages. I think maybe we better ask fifty thousand, and then we'll be sure to get twenty-five."

"Are you sure Linda has twenty-five thousand?"

"Positive. Didn't she get that for her ocean flight?"

"Sure. But maybe she blew it in on clothes," suggested the woman.

"Somehow I don't believe she did," replied Ed, with a knowing smile. Then, abruptly he frowned. "Elsie, you've got to get hold of that kid and take her away somewheres—pretend it's her old home. It's a lucky break for us that she lost her memory."

"I'll say so."

Suddenly Mrs. Fishberry jumped up and darted over to her host's chair, seating herself on the arm.

"Listen, Ed," she said, coyly taking his hand, "have you thought that we've got to be married before this suit comes into court, if you don't want to appear in it? If I sue for damages, I've got to be the child's real aunt."

The man laughed.

"You win, Elsie! O.K. with me. You get those pictures by Sunday, and the kid too, and I'll get the license. We'll get married Monday morning."

Mrs. Fishberry stood up, satisfied. She had won everything she wanted. The plan was simple; she would go out in the country to that old house on the Fox River on Saturday, and get her pictures and records. On Sunday she would take them to the Carltons', and demand that the young girl come away with her. She would return to Chicago and put the child into an insane asylum, from which there would be no hope of escape. On Monday, Mrs. Fishberry would be married to Ed Tower, and after the old house was burned to the ground, they would go on their honeymoon. When they returned, they would collect the small fortune

from the Trust Company and proceed to sue Miss Linda Carlton for the sum of fifty thousand dollars!

She did not see a single flaw in the plan, for if the young girl was in an asylum, there would be no one to protest.

Chapter IX

The Take-Off

"I think Mr. Clavering is too optimistic," remarked Miss Carlton at the breakfast table Saturday morning. "It doesn't seem possible to me that all seven planes will come through that treasure hunt without any mishaps. And if someone is injured, nobody would feel like having a week-end party at that Inn."

"Nothing's going to happen, Aunt Emily," Linda replied, her eyes sparkling with excitement. She and Amy were both dressed for the flight, and anxious to get off.

Miss Carlton rose from the table and kissed her niece good-by. She and half a dozen of the older folks were going by boat across Lake Michigan, and then on by automobile to Lake Winnebago, where the party was to be held.

"I hope you win, dear," she said. "And don't forget to take the lunch Anna has packed for you."

"We'll see you to-night, Auntie," returned Linda. "At the Inn."

"I sincerely hope so," answered the other, a little doubtfully.

In fairness to the contestants, Mr. Clavering had arranged that the planes start from different places, so that they would not have to wait long in turn for their take-offs. Linda and Ralph were to go early to the Green Falls airport to fly their autogiros up the shore, to wait until ten o'clock, the appointed time. Tom Hulbert and Frank Lawlor were to motor to a town a short distance from Green Falls, where their planes were in readiness, while Joe Elliston, Dot Crowley, and Bert Keen were all to leave from the Green Falls airport.

These last three pilots, with their passengers, were waiting at the airport when Linda, Ralph, and Amy drove over about half-past nine.

"Hurry up and get those windmills out of the way!" ordered Joe Elliston. "They clutter up the place."

"And be sure you don't cheat!" remarked Sarah Wheeler. "Wait till ten o'clock before you start."

"As if five or ten minutes would make any difference," replied Ralph. "The victor will probably win by hours, not minutes."

"I hope there won't be a thunderstorm," observed Madge Keen, who was flying with her husband. "It certainly is hot."

"I'm dropping out if anything like that happens," said Sarah flatly. "I'm not taking chances."

Joe looked a little doubtfully at the sky, although the sun was shining brightly. But, being an amateur, he was nervous, although he had been lucky enough to secure a Fleet, which was the kind of plane he had used for his lessons.

Linda put Amy into the autogiro, and started her motor. How smoothly it was running! Yesterday's work was worthwhile.

"Good-by, everybody! See you all in Milwaukee!" she called. They had been given instructions to fly to the airport in that city, and there to ask for directions.

Ralph took off a few minutes later, not quite so gracefully as Linda, but nevertheless without any mishaps.

Fifteen minutes later they waved to each other as they came down along the shore of the lake, a short distance from each other, to wait for ten o'clock to arrive.

"Are you going straight across the lake?" Ralph asked Linda.

"No," she replied. "If I fly southwest, I can reach Milwaukee a lot faster. If we went directly across the lake from here, we'd have over thirty

miles to fly down the western shore of Lake Michigan."

The young man looked dubious.

"I guess I'm a fool, but I believe I'll take the longer route. I'm kind of afraid of that lake. I'd hate to have to swim it."

Linda smiled, but not in contempt. She admired him all the more for his cautiousness in handling his new autogiro.

They waited together until two minutes of ten, then, with a handclasp and a mutual expression of hope for good luck, they walked back to their machines and gave them the gun.

Like Linda, Amy was in high spirits, and she thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful flight over the water. It was lovely and cool in the sky, so different from the hot atmosphere below. Linda watched her compass carefully and reached Milwaukee without any deviation.

Looking about cautiously, to make sure that none of the other planes was making a landing at the same time, she brought her "Ladybug" down on the runway and climbed out.

A smiling mechanic came towards her, congratulating her upon her success thus far, and handing her a typewritten message.

"Fly to Columbus airport," she read. "And there receive further directions."

"How far is Columbus?" she asked the mechanic. "Fifty miles?"

"A little over, perhaps. Want an inspection, or some gas?"

Linda glanced at the indicator. "I don't believe so," she answered. Then, turning to her companion, she asked, "Are you hungry, Amy?"

"No! No!" cried the girl. "Let's not take the time to eat. Let's have a drink of water, and get on our way. We just have to win!"

Linda smiled and nodded in agreement, and the mechanic brought them some water.

"Have you any news of the other flyers in our race?" she asked him. "How many have been here so far?"

"Two—Lt. Hulbert and a Mr. Lawlor, I believe. About fifteen minutes ago—the lieutenant was the first. And I heard that one fellow couldn't get his plane into the air at all, and that he had to drop out before he even started."

"That must have been Joe Elliston!" exclaimed Linda, immediately. "He was scared, anyway."

"Yes, I believe that was the name, though the message wasn't very clear. His plane is a Fleet?"

"Yes. Poor kid!" remarked Linda, sympathetically. "I wish we could help him."

"Come on, Linda, we must go!" urged Amy, impatiently.

"Now you're going to taste some speed, Amy," Linda said, as they climbed into the cockpits. "I'm going to let her out to the limit. I want to reach Columbus in half an hour—I'm very hungry!"

Scarcely had they made their ascent when they spotted another plane approaching the airport. Though they could not see the pilot, Linda identified it as an Avian, the plane which Dot Crowley had selected for the hunt.

"Step on it! Step on it!" cried Amy, clapping her hands. "Go on, Linda!"

Thrilled with the excitement of the race, Linda urged her "Ladybug" to her greatest speed. What fun it was to know that you were safe, and yet to fly along at more than a hundred miles an hour! And how glad she was that she had brought Amy! The child was having the time of her life.

Clouds, deep piles of heavy white clouds were gathering above them when Linda brought her autogiro down at the Columbus airport. Again a mechanic came out with a typewritten message, but this time a warning was also issued.

"We are advising all pilots in the hunt to wait until the storm is over," he said. "The sky looks bad, and the weather report is unfavorable."

Linda frowned and opened the lunch box which Anna had packed.

"You really think it is dangerous?" she asked, looking up at the clouds.

"We certainly do. Those clouds mean a thunderstorm."

"Oh, what do we care?" demanded Amy, as she hastily ate a sandwich. "It didn't stop the others, did it?"

"No. But they were here a little earlier, before the skies were so black."

"How many?" inquired Linda.

"Three. Two Moths and an Avian."

"Tom Hulbert and Frank Lawlor—and—and Dot!" cried Linda. So Dot Crowley had caught up to them and had beaten them! Funny, they hadn't seen her plane go past. But perhaps she was flying higher.

"Then we'll have to go, too," Linda decided, rather recklessly for her. "We'll eat while you put in some gas."

She opened the paper and read the directions. This time they were more difficult. This was to be the finish!

"Fly northwest, past Beaver Dam to Fox River. Follow the river, west, then north, to Lake Waupin. Continue about ten miles, looking for a large old house of gray plaster, with a flat roof and a tower. Land in a field behind this, and search the barn. Treasure is hidden in the barn. It is in bright red wrapping."

Reading the words over her shoulder, Amy gasped in excitement.

"Those words are familiar, Linda. I—I know the Fox River! I'm sure I do."

Linda, who had completely forgotten the mystery about the girl in the excitement of the morning, gazed at her in surprise.

"But you are supposed to come from Montana," she said. "You couldn't have come this far."

"I don't know," replied the perplexed girl. "But I do know these names are familiar."

All the while the skies grew darker than before, the thunder sounded nearer and nearer, and Linda became more fearful. Was she acting foolishly, in defiance of her aunt's dearest wishes? But how she hated to give up, now that she had come this far!

Suddenly another plane swooped down from the skies with an awful speed that sent a shiver through Linda's body. It was going to crash, she

felt sure; the pilot could not control it. She pulled Amy back into the hangar, and watched her autogiro nervously. Would it be hit by that speeding plane, hit and dashed to pieces, too?

But miraculously the descending plane passed over the "Ladybug" and hit the ground with a thump, bouncing high into the air—seeming to hover a breathless second—then turning a pancake. It was all Linda could do to restrain a scream, and Amy cried out in fright.

But a second later a woman crept smilingly from the upturned plane, and dragged a man after her. It was Madge Keen and her husband.

"Thank Heaven!" cried Linda, dashing breathlessly to their side. "You're not hurt?"

"No, only bruised a lot," replied Madge. "It was a wonderful escape. I guess Bert was in too much of a hurry—we were frightened of the storm. Doesn't it look black?"

"It certainly does," Linda admitted. "But I guess I'll try it."

Madge seized the other girl's hand and pleaded with her to wait.

"It's certain death!" she said. "You'll never make it, Linda!"

"I thought maybe I could get above the clouds,"

replied the other. "And my autogiro's so safe, compared to ordinary planes."

"Nothing's safe in a storm like this," remarked Madge. "We're going to wait here for Ralph, and take a taxi to a hotel. We saw him in Milwaukee, and we agreed to do that if the storm came on—that all three of us would drop out of the race. We'd have to now, anyhow," she added, pointing to the wrecked plane.

"Well, so long, then," answered Linda, hurrying Amy into the autogiro.

They had scarcely left the ground when the rain came in torrents and the thunder and lightning grew sharper and sharper, until the terrific claps seemed to be breaking right about them, almost into their ears. With stoic courage Linda made for the heights. But she could not get out of the storm by climbing, so wisely she directed her plane as best she could away from its direction, going almost exactly west.

Though well protected with their slickers and helmets, the rain poured into the girls' faces, making it impossible for Linda to see anything. With the clouds and the rain all about her, the earth was entirely invisible, and she had to depend solely upon her instruments.

"We're getting away from it!" cried Amy, who had been pretty well frightened for a while. Indeed, they did seem to be making progress, for the thunder seemed a little more distant.

The pilot could not take time to bother with the speaking tube, so she made no reply. She was afraid that she would come upon another plane in this semi-darkness, and that there would ensue one of those crashes which her Aunt Emily so dreaded.

But it was over soon—they had evidently passed through it, and the skies were lighter, with blue patches appearing here and there. With a deep sigh of thankfulness, Linda dipped her autogiro lower, that they might study the landscape, for she felt sure that they were now off their course.

It was ten minutes later, and the sun was shining, when they came to a river, a broad, beautiful stream that seemed almost too wide to be the Fox River, as Linda had pictured it.

"I don't think this is it!" she shouted to Amy. "But look for a gray stone house with a tower."

"There are too many houses," replied Amy. "The one we want is supposed to be all alone."

Linda flew still lower, along the bank of the river. Suddenly Amy spied a tower.

"That must be it!" cried Linda, in excited joy. "And there's a good big field—"Abruptly all her

delight died. For there were already three planes standing in that field! She must have lost the treasure hunt!

"We're too late!" she wailed.

"Don't land!" shouted Amy, with intense excitement. "There isn't any barn around here. Besides, I know—I'm sure—this isn't the Fox River! It's the Wisconsin."

"Then those pilots are wrong?"

"They must be."

"Amy, are you sure?"

"Yes, positive. Go on, Linda! We'll beat 'em yet. Fly north! This is somehow familiar ground to me!"

Chapter X

The Treasure

Linda directed her plane upward and consulted her map. If Amy was right, and this was the Wisconsin River, there was still a chance of getting that prize. If the girl was wrong, it would be too late anyhow, for one of those three pilots would certainly have found the treasure by this time. In which case it would be better for Linda to fly directly to Lake Winnebago.

Assuming that Amy was right, and this was the Wisconsin and not the Fox River, she turned her plane to the northeast. Unfortunately, however, this act headed her right back into the storm.

Fresh clouds seemed to be gathering everywhere; it was impossible to climb above them, or to pass through them. The wind was blowing fiercely, sending the rotar blades about at a terrific speed. The autogiro seemed to sway; she felt herself suddenly in the grip of a whirlwind. Amy, frightened at last, held on to the sides of the cockpit with a deadly grip. Neither girl wore a safety

belt; it seemed any moment as if they would both be dashed over the sides of the plane.

"Be ready to jump, Amy, if I give a signal!" Linda shouted through the speaking tube to her companion. Her face was white and her lips tense with fear; the autogiro was out of her control entirely. She could only wait, and trust grimly to the rotars.

Had it been any other plane than an autogiro, Linda realized that it would long ago have been hurled mercilessly through space, probably upside down. But the little "Ladybug" was gallantly battling the winds, and Linda prayed fervently that she might get it under control.

Again it rocked violently, and with a shiver of agony, she turned to the tube to tell Amy to step off. Perhaps, she thought, she could stay with it herself a little longer. Just as she was about to speak, the autogiro righted itself again and the rain began to fall in torrents, wetting them thoroughly, but dispelling the worst of the cloud. A moment later the joy stick responded to Linda's touch; the plane made headway out of the grip of the wind. The young aviatrix breathed a prayer of thanksgiving.

They continued to fly onward amid the driving rain for some distance until the storm was spent

at last, and Linda came low to take a look at the landscape. It was Amy who first spotted the river.

"There it is, Linda!" she cried joyously, as one who sees a familiar sight after a long sojourn in a foreign country. "The Fox River! I know it! I'm positive of it! Keep right on—past Lake—Lake—I forget the name."

"Lake Waupin?" shouted Linda, consulting her map.

"Yes! Yes! How did you know?"

"By my map. How did you?"

"It's where I lived. I'm sure."

"Of course!" cried Linda. "This is somewhere near the spot where you met with your accident. I remember Dot and I flew over Lake Waupin, though we didn't know its name then. But where is there any house around here? It looks so desolate."

"Keep on going—follow the river. I'll watch for a tower."

Linda's excitement was intense; even if she didn't succeed in finding the treasure, she must be on the way to clearing up the mystery of Amy's past life. She pressed forward eagerly, watching the river, and looking for signs of a house.

A few miles farther on Amy spotted it, and almost rose in her seat.

"There it is, Linda!" she called. "And it's sort of familiar to me. Oh, can it be my home?"

"It seems reasonable," replied Linda, although it certainly did not fit in with Mrs. Fishberry's theory that Amy lived in Montana.

Just as Mr. Clavering had said, there was a field beyond, large enough for any kind of plane to land. Linda, however, did not bother with this; she selected a small spot behind the barn and brought the "Ladybug" to earth.

Wild with excitement the two girls jumped out and ran hand in hand to the barn. The big doors stood partially open; the place was empty and deserted. Amy peered inside.

Almost immediately Linda spotted the treasure. A soap box conspicuously painted red was reposing in the corner of the barn, where it could easily be seen at a glance. With a scream of delight she darted forward and made a motion to drag it out to the light to examine its contents. But it was no effort at all; the box was evidently empty.

"Don't you s'pose there's anything in it?" she gasped, as she set it down at the door, and began to pull out the newspaper packing. "Or is the box itself supposed to be the prize?"

Amy laughed.

"I don't know what you could use it for, except

as an ash box," she replied. "It wouldn't make a very good parlor ornament."

Linda continued to pull out the papers, thrusting them aside in haste, until at last her hands touched a candy box. But as she lifted that out, she realized that it, too, was empty!

She held it over to Amy, and the girl's eyes grew angry, as she took hold of the box.

"If it's a trick—after all we went through—" she began.

"Well, we'll have to be good sports," replied Linda, taking the box back and untying the red ribbon. "But before I open it, Amy, I want to say that if there is anything valuable in it, it's to be half yours. I'd never have found it if it hadn't been for you."

"That's sweet of you, Linda dear," replied the younger girl. "And I'll agree—provided it's something that can be divided. But if it should be a watch or a bracelet, or something like that, you have to consent to keep it."

"O.K.," answered Linda, and the girls clasped hands solemnly on the agreement; then laughed at themselves for taking so seriously what might prove to be only a joke.

Linda opened it at last, and found an envelope inside addressed to

"The Winner of the Treasure Hunt."

She guessed now what the prize must be: money, of course! That would be something which either a man or a girl could use, no matter which one won it. But she was not prepared for the amount which greeted her, as she slit the envelope, and drew out the long green paper inside. A check of one thousand dollars, payable to the winner of the hunt, with a space left for the proper name to be filled in, and with the signature of R. W. Clavering at the bottom!

"What is it?" inquired Amy gazing at the odd piece of paper, without any understanding. "Does it mean you will get a thousand dollars?"

"It *is* a thousand dollars!" replied Linda. "Surely, Amy, you have seen checks before?"

The girl solemnly shook her head.

"Never," she asserted.

"Well, it's all right! And you have to take five hundred!" cried Linda, in delight. "That will pay your way at a business college, Amy—so that you never have to go back to that horrid Mrs. Fishberry! Oh, isn't it just too good to be true!" She gave the girl a joyous hug. "Now let's start back, Amy."

Her companion hesitated.

"I'd love to see that house," she said. "It—it is somehow familiar to me."

Linda consulted her watch.

"We might as well," she agreed. "It's early. And we can easily make Lake Winnebago in an hour. All right, come on."

"But suppose somebody lives there——"

"Then we'll just make up an excuse and go away. Or—Amy—suppose it were your real family!"

"Oh, Linda, suppose!" The tears came to Amy's eyes, and she added, wistfully, "Isn't it strange that I can't remember a thing about Mrs. Fishberry, or anybody else?"

"You will soon," Linda insisted optimistically. "Things are coming back gradually. Come on, let's knock at the back door."

Hand in hand, the girls ran across the field of tall grass and weeds which separated the house from the barn and came to the kitchen, which was built out from the house as a separate wing, two stories in height. But the door was closed and barred, and all the windows apparently were locked up. There seemed to be little doubt that the place was deserted.

"Do you remember it, Amy?" asked Linda, anxiously.

"Yes—but only like something that happened in a dream," she replied. "It seems to me that I ran barefoot through the fields—and—and—I can sort of remember drowning in the Fox River, and nobody helping me— Yes, it must have been here."

"Let's go around front," suggested Linda, watching Amy's face all the while.

"Yes, let's. It's an ugly house, isn't it, Linda? So big and gloomy—and—ugh!" A shiver ran through the girl's body, and she clung to Linda wretchedly. Another memory flashed into her brain.

"Linda," she sobbed, "there's a ghost in that tower."

Linda stepped back and looked up at the roof of the house. As Mr. Clavering had said, there was a tower by which the pilots could identify the house. It rose straight from the flat mansard roof, about two stories in height. It was square, with a small window on each side, but from the ground where the girls stood, it was impossible to see within.

"How do you know?" asked Linda.

"I know it because I could see it at night from my bed-room window. I slept over the kitchen, in

that wing, and I could see the tower. Oh, Linda, I'm afraid! We're here all alone!"

"Don't, don't, dear!" pleaded Linda. "But we'll go back to the autogiro unless you want to go around front. There can't be anybody at home now——"

She stopped suddenly, for she heard a queer noise inside, as if someone were moving about.

"Do you hear that?" whispered Amy, as if she were afraid to speak aloud.

"Yes. Let's go see if we can get in!"

Amy held back, but Linda went over to the nearest window and peered in. She saw only a dreary room, with dark, ugly furniture—a room which looked as if no one had recently lived in it.

"That wasn't anybody real, Linda," protested Amy. "It was the ghost. It often made queer noises at night. Oh, please let's get away before anything happens!"

"All right. But I would love to investigate. I'm going to make Dot come over with me on Monday, if we have to climb in a window. I don't believe in ghosts, Amy!"

"Oh, you mustn't do that, Linda! The house is evil—I know now that I'm lucky never to have to go back to it. I don't ever want to see it again!"

Anxious to get the girl away from her morbid

thoughts, Linda challenged her to a race back to the autogiro, and they reached it together in a couple of minutes.

They climbed into the cockpits and Linda went through the usual motions of starting the engine. But, though the self-starter responded to her efforts, the motor refused to take hold. There would be a little spurt, then silence again. Patiently Linda tried over and over; each time the engine failed to respond.

With a greater sense of fear than Amy had experienced even in that terrific whirlwind, she clung desperately to the sides of the cockpit.

"Linda, what's the matter?" she gasped, hoarsely.

"Only a faulty spark plug, I think," responded the other, cheerfully. "I can easily fix it."

"No, no," said the other girl, with assurance. "I know what it is—it's that evil spirit—that ghost in the tower!"

"Now Amy, be sensible," returned Linda, lightly. But when she glanced at the girl's white, drawn face, she realized how intensely she was suffering, and a real fear took possession of her, too—a deadly fear that the child would lose her reason as well as her memory.

"Linda, you don't know! You can't know!"

Amy leaned over and gripped her companion's hand. "If we stay here after dark, something dreadful will happen to us!"

"Well, we're not going to stay here that long," Linda assured her, with a great effort to keep her voice calm and natural. "Now jump out and help me."

As fast as she could, Linda went to work to locate and replace the missing spark plug, and all the while she tried to keep Amy occupied with little jobs to help her. But it was pitiful to watch the young girl's trembling hands, her white face, her shaking body. She was more of a hindrance than a help, yet Linda worked on as fast as she could, desperately hoping that nothing else would prove to be wrong.

The tests and the work took longer than any job Linda had done since she had taken her course at the ground school, and it was after six o'clock when the engine finally responded. Linda heaved a deep sigh of relief, as she turned to announce the good news to Amy.

But the girl was not listening; her eyes were fixed upon the figure of a woman hurrying towards them.

"Who is it?" demanded Linda, excitedly, hope-

fully. Oh, if this should only prove to be the girl's mother! "Do you recognize her?"

"Yes," replied Amy, stepping back and clutching Linda's arm. "It's the Fish!"

At the same moment Linda too identified the woman who had come to her house that week to claim the young girl as her niece.

Mrs. Fishberry advanced triumphantly.

"I'm glad to find you here, Helen," she said. "Though why you trust yourself with a person who almost killed you, is beyond me."

"What do you mean?" demanded the girl, angrily.

"You know what I mean. And I have a witness, Miss Carlton, to prove that you—and not a car—knocked Helen down— But never mind that now. I have a picture of you, Helen, and here is your baptism certificate, and your mother's Bible. Now will you come with me?"

"No! No!" cried the girl. "I don't ever want to see you again."

Mrs. Fishberry held out the Bible and the family album for Linda to examine. At the same time she grasped Amy firmly by the arm.

"Do I have to go?" implored the girl. "I'll die if I ever have to live in that house again."

Mrs. Fishberry's eyes narrowed.

"So you remember it, do you?" she demanded.

"Only faintly—it—seems to me that I did live there. Was there a ghost?"

"Of course not," replied Mrs. Fishberry. "You lived here with your old grandfather and when he died, maybe you imagined you saw his ghost— But come along. I'm taking you to Chicago with me. I promise you won't have to live there again."

Amy looked reassured.

"All right," she agreed. "I'll go. But please give Miss Carlton our address, so that she can write to me, and can send me my pretty clothes."

"Miss Carlton will hear from me soon," replied the woman with a knowing smile. "Just now I can't give any address, for we'll go to a hotel in Chicago. Now come. I have a taxi down the road."

Tearfully Amy kissed Linda good-by, as if she were her only real friend in the world, and the aviatrix returned to her autogiro. But she was despondent; all the joy of finding the treasure was lost in the grief of the parting with Amy.

She climbed into the cockpit and started her engine. As the "Ladybug" rose into the air, and reached the height of the tower, Linda remembered the ghost and could not restrain her impulse

to circle back around the house, to take a glimpse for herself through the windows. Luckily there were no large trees close to the walls; she believed that she could pass the place on the side, and with the use of her field glasses, peer into the very window which had been visible to Amy if she had really slept in that wing over the kitchen, as she believed.

Turning the autogiro about, Linda dipped it to the proper height, and directed it back towards the tower. She decreased her speed to the lowest that she dared, and passed slowly by the tower, her glasses at her eyes.

The sight which Linda saw through the dusty window almost brought a scream of horror to her lips. It was unreal! Uncanny! Unbelievable! There, as clear as the tower itself, was a horrible dark figure, crouching against the pane of glass, with a face so thin that it seemed nothing but bones. Yet it was not a dead skeleton, for two evil, gleaming eyes stared vacantly at Linda. And, as the plane passed by, a deadly white hand was raised from the figure's dark cloak, and seemed to point with menace at the young pilot.

Dumb with horror, Linda continued to stare at the apparition, forgetful of the autogiro she was

piloting. Then abruptly she realized that she was dropping to the ground, and with a jerk she pulled back the joy stick.

Wiping the cold beads of sweat from her forehead, she put on all possible speed, and made a record flight to Lake Winnebago. Yet the ghastly vision haunted her all the way to her destination; never in her life was she more thankful for a safe landing than when she finally brought the "Ladybug" to earth on the field near the Inn, where Mr. Clavering's party had already gathered.

Chapter XI

The Return of the Flyers

The older people who had gone by boat and taxicab to the Inn at Lake Winnebago arrived early on Saturday afternoon. What was their surprise to be met at the door by Joe Elliston and Sarah Wheeler!

"How did you get here so soon?" demanded Mr. Clavering in amazement. "And did you find the prize?"

The young man flushed.

"No, sir, we never even got started. One of my wheels dug into a sand bank at the take-off, and was slightly damaged. There didn't seem to be much use waiting to have it fixed, while the others got all that start. So I went back and got my car, and Sarah and I drove."

Miss Carlton nodded approvingly.

"You certainly showed good sense, Joe," she remarked. "I have been terribly nervous and worried all afternoon, on account of that frightful storm."

"Oh, you can be sure that Linda is equal to any kind of weather," put in Sarah, reassuringly. "If there's one aviatrix in the world who knows what she's doing, it's your niece!"

"I hope so," commented the older woman. "But it isn't only Linda I'm worried about—it's everybody. I shan't have a happy minute until all seven planes arrive."

"Then you'll never have a happy moment, Miss Carlton," remarked Joe, teasingly. "Because our plane can't arrive!"

"Well then, six planes," corrected the other, smiling.

"It's possible," observed Mrs. Crowley, "that they may all have been forced down on account of that storm. So they may not get here till morning. I don't intend to worry until I hear bad news."

"That's the idea!" approved Mr. Clavering. "Now how about some iced drinks, and some sandwiches. What'll it be?"

The whole group, composed of half a dozen older people and the young couple, seated themselves on the beautiful porch overlooking the lake and sipped the cooling drinks with which the maids supplied them at Mr. Clavering's orders. They had scarcely finished when a taxicab drew up to

the Inn and Ralph and the two Keens got out.

"What luck?" demanded everybody at once.

Madge Keen laughingly told the story.

"The only prize we got was a lot of bruises at Columbus, trying to make a landing in too great a hurry, to get out of the storm. Bert smashed the plane, Mr. Clavering."

"Don't worry about that," replied the latter, reassuringly. "The insurance will take care of any damage. Are you sure you're not hurt?"

"Positive."

"And you, Ralph?"

"I left my autogiro at the Columbus airport," replied the young man; "because I didn't want to risk the storm. I knew if I waited it would be too late, for the other four planes had already gone when I arrived."

"Then Linda and Dot were both flying through that dreadful thunderstorm!" cried Miss Carlton, woefully.

"And Kit and Sue!" added Mr. Clavering.

The party separated to go to their respective rooms to unpack, and half an hour later the young people gathered at the lake in their bathing suits. The storm had completely passed and the sun was shining brightly. Several of the older people joined the group, but both Mr. Clavering and Miss Carl-

ton preferred to wait at the Inn for news of the missing flyers.

It was still early, however—too early to worry about their arrival—and Mr. Clavering was rewarded about five o'clock by the sight of two planes flying one behind the other. Both passed over the Inn, and the passengers leaned out and waved. Although neither Mr. Clavering nor Miss Carlton could make out who they were, the latter knew that neither was Linda. She did not know much about airplanes, but at least she could identify an autogiro when she saw it.

Both planes landed some distance from the Inn, and Mr. Clavering decided to go after the flyers in his car.

"I was afraid there weren't going to be any planes here at all," he remarked to Miss Carlton as he left the porch. "It would have been humiliating to have all the pilots come over in cars."

"Humiliating, perhaps, but very sensible," returned the other. She watched the sky all the while he was gone and kept looking at her watch. Why, oh, why, must her precious child be the last to arrive?

Kit and Tom Hulbert, Sue Emery and Frank Lawlor returned with Mr. Clavering in a few minutes. They were all in high spirits, obviously un-

harmed by the storm, but they announced immediately that they had not found the treasure.

"Linda got it, of course," said Kit. "But she deserves it, and I'm glad."

Miss Carlton's face lighted up with joy, not because her niece had won the prize, but because she believed she was safe.

"You have seen Linda?" she asked, eagerly.

Kit shook her head.

"No, Miss Carlton, we haven't. Nobody has seen her since the storm. But we four got on the wrong track, and got lost, and Dot Crowley did the same thing. We all landed beside a river, where there was a house with the tower, but it wasn't the right house."

"Where is Dot?" inquired Miss Carlton.

"Coming. And you see that accounts for everybody except Linda, because Dad told me that the others have already arrived. So Linda must have the prize."

Miss Carlton groaned.

"I don't agree with you, Kitty dear," she said. "It's more likely that Linda has crashed during that storm, and is stranded—possibly hurt—in some lonely place."

"Now please don't worry, Miss Carlton," urged Kitty, sympathetically. "It's only six o'clock, and

you know Linda is the best flyer of all. Besides, the 'Ladybug' is safer than an ordinary plane."

Mr. Clavering had given orders that the dinner be moved on to seven-thirty, in the hope that Linda might arrive in time. At exactly five minutes after the hour the "Ladybug" came roaring through the skies, and to the amusement of everyone, landed right on the front lawn of the Inn. Trying to smile gayly in spite of her encounter with Mrs. Fishberry and her vision of the strange ghost in the tower, Linda Carlton stepped out.

Everybody ran down the steps to greet her, and her aunt kissed her as if she had never expected to see her again.

"You're safe!" she cried, with intense relief.

"Get the treasure?" demanded Dot, excitedly.

"Yes," replied Linda, smiling. "And it's wonderful, Mr. Clavering!" She dug into her pocket and displayed the thousand dollar check to everyone's view.

"Whew!" exclaimed Jim Valier. "Congratulations, Linda! And can I go with you next time?"

At his joking words everybody all at once remembered Amy. "What has happened to the child?" demanded several of them at the same time.

Linda looked serious.

"She's all right," she hastened to inform them. "But the queerest thing happened. That house must have been her old home, and Mrs. Fishberry was there. She took her away with her."

Mr. Clavering nodded.

"That isn't so strange as you might think," he said. "When I picked out the spot to hide the treasure, I was flying over the country where Dot Crowley said the accident must have occurred. And I selected that house because the tower was so easily visible from the skies."

"And did you meet Mrs. Fishberry when you hid the treasure?" inquired Linda.

"No. The house was locked up and deserted. So I went to the barn. I thought if anyone should happen along to steal it, that a check like that wouldn't be of any use to them. I gave my bank a list of the people who might be entitled to cash it, with strict orders to refuse anyone else."

The banquet and the dance that followed were a huge success; even Miss Carlton had to admit that the treasure hunt had ended wonderfully, without a single real mishap. Moreover, there was no jealousy regarding Linda's triumph; they all thought that she deserved her good fortune and rejoiced with her. Strangely enough, she herself was the only member of the party who was not en-

tirely happy. She was worried about Amy, and still haunted by the dreadful apparition which she had seen.

She could not bring herself to confide her experiences and her fears to her aunt, who was so timid about everything, but the following day, when the party had scattered for swimming and for golf, she sought Dot Crowley, and took her down to a bench beside the lake, where they could be alone.

She told the other girl of her mistrust of Mrs. Fishberry, and of her dread of what might happen to Amy, in the keeping of that woman. Then she concluded by describing the ghost in the tower.

Dot's eyes opened wide in amazement.

"It must be a fake, Linda," she said.

"It can't be," replied the other. "Because it *moved.* I saw the hands move, and I'm almost positive the eyes followed me!"

"No wonder the poor girl was so terrified. Remember that first night in the hospital?"

"Yes. The thing frightened me, I can assure you, Dot. And yet I feel that I've got to get to the bottom of it all. It fascinates, too, but it terrifies me."

"What terrifies you, Miss Carlton?" asked a voice behind them.

"You do!" replied Linda, laughingly, as she turned about to see Mike O'Malley grinning at her.

"Well, I didn't mean to," he apologized. "But will you forgive me and tell me all about the hunt, and winning that marvelous prize?"

"Of course," agreed Linda, and she proceeded to relate the story, even including Mrs. Fishberry's reappearance.

"Did you get her address, when she took Amy away?" he asked.

"No, I tried, but Mrs. Fishberry wouldn't give it—said she hadn't a permanent one, only a hotel in Chicago."

"Shucks!" cried Mike, in dismay. "There's something queer about this business! That fish is crooked, if I know what I'm talking about. How about that home in Montana she talked about the first time? And why didn't she mention this place before, if she had a key, and could get in?— Miss Carlton, if you care for Amy, I think you'd better go after her— I'd—like to help you."

"Yes, I believe you're right, Mike," agreed Linda. "Only I don't know just what to do."

"Let's fly over to the place to-morrow," suggested Dot. "We could go right from here, instead of going home to Green Falls first."

"It suits me," agreed Linda. It was just what she was wanting, yet dreading to do.

"May I trail along after you in my Ford?" asked Mike.

"Yes, indeed," replied Linda. "I'd love to have you. And will you bring some tools, so that we can force our way into that tower, if it is necessary? I suspect trouble there."

"You're really going to dare that?" demanded Dot.

"Dare what?" demanded Mike.

Linda and Dot exchanged whimsical glances. "You wait and see," said Linda. "If we get into that tower, I'll show you the strangest sight you ever laid your eyes on!"

"Then," asserted the boy, "we'll get in, if we have to scale the walls! I'm always out for strange stories for the *Star.*"

"Well, you'll get one there," Linda promised, "if you help us get in."

Chapter XII

Trickery

When Linda left Amy with Mrs. Fishberry at the old house, the latter slowly led the way towards the road. But as soon as the autogiro vanished from sight she stood still, and gazed straight at the girl.

"You still don't remember me, Helen?" she asked.

The girl shook her head.

"No, I don't, Mrs. Fishberry."

"Call me Aunt Elsie, please— But you claim to remember the house?"

"Yes—sort of. But you said I lived in Montana," she replied, in confusion.

"You lived here with your grandfather for a while," Mrs. Fishberry explained, "after your father and mother died. They were killed in an automobile accident when you were a baby—" So far this was the truth. But what the woman went on to add was a lie which she told at Ed

Tower's request.— "After your grandfather died, I took you to Montana to live with me. Your uncle Ed is your only living relative. He and your father were brothers."

"And their name was Tower?" asked Helen.

"Yes. I think that's why your grandfather built that high tower on his house—because of his name. The idea pleased him."

"But if my uncle Ed is my only living relative, what are you? I thought you said you were my aunt!"

"I'm not really your aunt yet—but I will be on Monday, for I'm going to marry your uncle Ed," admitted Mrs. Fishberry. "No, I am a widow now —an old friend of the family. But I offered to bring you up when your grandfather died, and you have always called me 'Aunt Elsie.' Your uncle was traveling so much on business that he couldn't take care of you."

Mrs. Fishberry smiled to herself with satisfaction as she told this story. Not a bad story, she thought, for one that had to be made up so quickly. And the girl actually seemed to believe it!

Both were silent for a moment, while another idea leaped into the woman's mind. Why not leave the girl here, locked in this empty house, while

she returned to Chicago? They could get her again on Monday, when Ed came over to set fire to the place. Surely there must be food in the kitchen. But she mustn't let Helen suspect that she was going to be left alone!

"I don't see the car," she remarked, casually. "The driver must have gone away. I told him if I didn't come back in half an hour that he needn't wait— We'll spend the night here, dear, and your uncle will drive over for us to-morrow."

The girl stared at the speaker in horror. She simply couldn't spend another night in this awful house! All too vividly she remembered the ghost in the tower.

"We can't, Aunt Elsie!" she protested. "It's too—awful!" Her voice had sunk to a hoarse whisper.

"What's too awful?" asked Mrs. Fishberry, lightly.

"That house. The ghost in the tower."

"What ghost?"

"There is a terrible ghost in that tower at night. I can see it from my old bed-room window. His —hands—move!"

"Now dear, you're being silly," reproved the woman. "How can you remember anything like

that, that happened so long ago? It must have been some foolish dream you had when you were not much more than a baby."

"But I can even picture it now!" she persisted.

"Oh, come on," urged the other, grasping her by the arm. "You're too old for such ridiculous fancies now. Besides, I'm right here. Nothing can harm you." She almost dragged her back by force to the house.

"I—I—know I'll die, Aunt Elsie," sobbed Helen, her voice shaking with fear. "Or go crazy."

Mrs. Fishberry drew down the corners of her mouth.

"I think that you're crazy now," she remarked, with biting scorn.

The girl started to cry piteously. She was weak and helpless; now that Linda Carlton and her dear Aunt Emily had been taken from her, there was no one in the world to protect her. For she had no faith in this strange uncle, who apparently cared as little for her as did this harsh woman.

"I want Linda!" she cried. "Oh, Linda, why did you leave me?"

"You little fool!" exclaimed Mrs. Fishberry in exasperation. "You're acting like an idiot. That girl was no friend to you."

"She was the best friend I ever had!" cried Helen, vehemently.

"Oh, yeah?" snarled her companion. She was so irritated that she gave up her pretense of being the kind aunt. "And you were too dumb to see through those scheming Carltons!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Helen, up in arms at the slur to her new friends.

"They were trying to pull the wool over your eyes, of course! So that you wouldn't remember anything."

"What do you mean by 'pull the wool over my eyes?' "

"It's just an expression, Miss Dumb-bell. I see that I have to explain everything to you, as if you were a child six years old. I'll have to tell you in words of one syllable:

"Linda Carlton was doing stunts with that plane of hers near to the ground. Somebody, never mind who, but somebody we know, saw her. And she crashed and *hit you!* There wasn't any car driving along the road at all. So she made up the story and got her friend to swear that it was true!"

Helen's dark eyes were blazing with righteous anger.

"Don't you dare to say Linda Carlton would

lie!" she exclaimed. "She's the soul of honor, and so is Dot Crowley!"

"You don't say so," observed Mrs. Fishberry, sarcastically. "Well, I happen to know she did lie, and we've got proof of it. Why do you suppose she and her aunt were so nice to you? Because they thought you were beautiful, or interesting, or rich?"

"No, I guess not," admitted Helen, choking over the words. "I guess I was a sight in those dreadful clothes—" She turned to her companion accusingly. "If you took care of me, why didn't you dress me better?"

"Because we're poor. I had to sacrifice everything to provide food for you."

"But your clothes are pretty nice," observed the girl, shrewdly.

"Well, what of it?" snapped the other. "You haven't answered my question yet. Why did the Carltons make so much of you, if it wasn't to stop your mouth? They thought that if they entertained you for a week in their house, afterwards, if your memory came back, you wouldn't sue them."

"What do you mean by 'sue them?' " asked Helen, with that amazing ignorance that she showed every once in a while regarding ordinary

words. "There was a girl in Linda's crowd named Sue Emery——"

"You get dumber by the minute!" returned Mrs. Fishberry. "We're going to make Miss Linda Carlton pay fifty thousand dollars damages because she smashed into you with her plane. Now, do you get that?"

"You wouldn't!" cried Helen, in horror. "You just couldn't!"

"Sure we could. The law is on our side." The woman's manner suddenly changed, and she remembered to play the part of the fond aunt. "Now don't you worry, Helen," she added. "It's for you we're doing it. We'll spend the money on you. First, for a good doctor—a specialist to restore your memory—and then for education and pretty clothes. You'll be a fine lady some day, if you don't act silly about Linda Carlton."

"But I love her, and I don't believe anything against her."

"You love her more than you do me, because she took care of you for a week, while I gave the best years of my life to you!"

"I'm sorry, Aunt Elsie, but you can't expect me to be grateful for something I can't remember."

While they had been talking they had reached the front door of the house and stopped at the

steps of the porch. The wooden boards had rotted and the heavy door was sadly in need of paint. Everything about the place suggested neglect, ruin, and decay.

Helen shuddered.

"Let's not stay here!" she begged. "I'd rather walk all the way to town than sleep in this haunted house over night."

"Nonsense," replied the other. "I'm tired and hungry. Come on in."

She pulled the girl up the steps, and, selecting a large key from her hand bag, inserted it into the lock and turned the knob. The heavy door creaked and opened.

Inside, the house was gloomy and forbidding. All the old-fashioned shutters were closed so that the appearance within was almost of night. Helen stopped at the doorway and shivered with fear.

"Come along back to the kitchen and we'll see if we can find something to eat," said Mrs. Fishberry in a cheerful tone.

"I don't want to!" objected Helen.

"Don't be a coward!" returned the other. "I'm ashamed of you!"

Plucking up her courage the girl led the way through the large dim hall, with its great dark staircase in the center, to the wing where the

kitchen had been built. The door of this room was locked on the outside with another huge key.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Mrs. Fishberry, as she opened the door. "Now can't we get some light into this room?"

She walked over to the windows and tried to raise them. But they were evidently nailed and barred on the outside.

"I wonder whether there is any food," she remarked. "And what kind of stove this is."

"It's an oil stove," answered Helen, in a flash. "And there's a supply of oil under that table. And here's where the food is kept," she added, pointing to a large cupboard.

Mrs. Fishberry eyed her narrowly.

"You remember pretty well, Helen," she said.

"Yes, I do. Look, here's tea and sugar and oatmeal. Well, we won't starve."

"That's good. Now can you remember where to get the water?"

"Yes, there's a pump out back. But this door won't open. It must be barred up—yes, I remember it was when Linda and I looked at it."

"That's all right. You go out the front door with these two buckets and bring in some water. I'll be looking about for a place to sleep."

While the girl was gone, Mrs. Fishberry made

an inspection. A small, winding staircase led from the kitchen to a room above, a bedroom, and in this she decided that Helen could sleep. It would be a simple matter to slip out of the kitchen and lock the girl in, leaving her here until Monday morning. With food and water at hand, no court could hold Mrs. Fishberry responsible if anything happened. And what was the use of taking her to Chicago and paying unnecessary board for her in the meanwhile?

It was all accomplished without the slightest difficulty. When Helen returned, Mrs. Fishberry waited only long enough to light the oil stove and to put some oatmeal on to cook. Then she asked the girl to run up the staircase and see whether she had dropped her handkerchief when she was up in the bedroom. By the time Helen had returned the kitchen door to the hall was locked and Mrs. Fishberry was turning the key in the outer door of the house.

Five minutes later she stepped into her taxicab and bade the driver return to the railroad station.

Chapter XIII

The Haunted House

When Helen came down the crooked staircase from the bedroom into the kitchen, she did not perceive at once that she was alone. Though not so dark as the rest of the house—for there were no shutters at the kitchen windows—this room was far from bright. Two small windows afforded the only means of admitting the light, and each of these had several boards nailed across the outside.

"Aunt Elsie, where are you?" she called, trying to keep her voice calm.

There was no answer.

"Aunt Elsie!" she cried, in a louder tone, as she rushed over to the door. To her horror she found it locked.

Darting to the nearest window, she peered outside. But as there was no view of the front from the kitchen, she did not see her.

In a panic she started to scream.

"Mrs. Fishberry! Aunt Elsie! Where are you?"

Wildly she looked about the dimly-lighted room, as if in some corner she expected to see the ghost of the tower, working its evil upon them, because they had dared to return to this old house.

But she saw nothing, and overcome with terror, she sank to the floor in a bitter abandon of weeping.

The room grew darker; the silence became ominous. Any moment she expected that weird apparition with its skinny hands to enter through the closed windows, and torture her. Now and again she heard queer moans and creaks, but whether they were caused by the wind in the trees outside, or mice in the ancient boards, she did not know.

She must have fallen asleep, crouched in that position on the floor, for when she regained consciousness it was entirely dark in the kitchen. Hardly realizing where she was, she stumbled to her feet and went right to the drawer in the cupboard where the candles were kept. She lighted one, and shivered anew at the weird, gloomy shadows it cast upon the walls. If the house seemed forbidding before, it was actually ghostly now. Strange shapes seemed to rise out of the darkness, to leer at her in her loneliness. She groped her way

to the stove and sat down upon the hard kitchen chair beside it to think.

It was the thought of Linda Carlton that kept her from losing her reason. Linda, who had flown over the Atlantic Ocean alone in the darkness, Linda who had assured Helen that her fears were groundless. She must live through this experience, she told herself, live to be a credit to the girl who had saved her life! Live to stand up for Linda Carlton when she should be accused by false witnesses! With a grim determination to control herself at any cost, she walked back to the cupboard for a saucer and a spoon, and forced herself to eat the oatmeal which had all the while been cooking on the oil stove.

The food revived her, and the water tasted good. Somehow she felt better.

Remembering that her bedroom was lighter than the kitchen, because she could open the shutters, Helen took a candle and ascended the stairs. But here a new terror took possession of her. She recalled the fact that she could see the ghost in the tower from the window!

Trembling at the very thought, she placed her candle on the old-fashioned wash stand and sat down on the big wooden bed to try to get command

of herself. What would Linda Carlton do in a case like this, she steadfastly asked herself?

"Forget it, of course," she replied aloud in a natural tone, and the sound of her own voice, without even a tremble, gave her courage.

"I won't even open that shutter," she decided, "and then I shan't have to see it!"

With this resolve, she set herself to the task of opening the other window and of making her preparations for bed. How familiar it all was! She remembered even the contents of the bureau drawers: an old doll which she had kept since her childhood, some other toys, and a few clothes. Very few indeed, for she must have been exceedingly poor.

As she wandered about the old-fashioned room, so different from the bedrooms of Linda's friends, her eyes lighted upon the book case. Filled with strange volumes of adventure, which must have belonged to her grandfather. And then, on a bedside table, she came upon her own little Bible.

As she opened this worn black book, a picture fell out. An old-fashioned picture of an old woman —a kindly person, with a sweet smile. Helen's heart beat fast; she seized the picture with trembling fingers. Memories flooded back to her in wild

confusion, but at the center of them all was this dear woman—her old nurse—Mrs. Smalley!

"Oh, darling Nana!" she cried, ecstatically kissing the photograph, and calling the woman by the old familiar name. "Nana, you have brought back my memory to me!"

But a start of dismay followed closely upon her joy. Where was Nana now?

"Why, she's out looking for me, of course!" she answered herself. "And she is so poor that she probably had to walk all the way to the city, and never even saw a newspaper until she got there! Oh, my poor dear Nana! She can't walk fast! Those wretched feet of hers! And her deafness, and her failing eyesight!"

The thought of the beloved nurse's plight took Helen's worries away from herself entirely. She forgot how lonely, how fearful, how forsaken she was. If only she could get out of this house, and hunt the dear soul! Do something for Nana, who would gladly lay down her life for her child!

But escape was impossible now; she must wait until to-morrow when Mrs. Fishberry had promised that her uncle would return.

"My uncle?" thought Helen, trying vainly to remember such a man. Surely he had not lived

here, for she could recall her life perfectly with Mrs. Smalley. They had lived alone after the death of her old grandfather, whom she could still vaguely recall. They had slept together in this bed, and cooked on that little oil stove, and tended a garden on the side of the house. Oh, there had been precious little money—she remembered how her nurse had sometimes sold books and pieces of furniture, and how she had often sent her to the post office to see whether there was a letter. Probably it was there she was walking on the day of that accident. But what letter could she have expected? From whom? From her uncle, of course! Who once in a while sent Mrs. Smalley a five-dollar bill.

But Helen could not remember what he was like. Perhaps he had visited them when she was a very small child, but she did not know what he looked like. And from what Mr. Smalley had said, he was not a good man, or a kind one.

But who was Mrs. Fishberry? Try as she might, she could not recall ever having seen her before. And why did her uncle want her now, after neglecting her all these years? Oh, if she had only known all this when she was with Linda Carlton, she need not have gone away with that woman! And now she would be free to hunt for Mrs. Smal-

ley! Linda would have been glad to help, would have flown all over the country, if need be, in her autogiro, to find her.

Helen sighed, but she did not despair. With the return of her memory a great weight was lifted from her heart. That ghost would not come into her room, she assured herself, with the shutters tightly closed, and the morning would bring freedom. Freedom to find Mrs. Smalley, to share with her that wonderful prize of five hundred dollars which Linda had so generously insisted that she take.

So she read her Bible for a while, as her nurse had trained her to do every evening before she went to bed, and at last, tired out by her exciting day in the skies, she fell fast asleep.

When she awoke, without even once experiencing any bad dream, she was in high spirits. How good it was to see the sunshine pouring in through the one open window and to hear the birds singing in the trees. Surely to-day her uncle would come for her.

She dressed and cooked herself some oatmeal and made tea for her breakfast. A search in the cupboard rewarded her with the discovery of some dried beans and a few home-made cookies. Made for her, of course, by dear Mrs. Smalley—in the

hope that her child would return! How unhappy the good woman must have been when day after day brought only disappointment!

All day long Helen watched at her bed-room window for some signs of arrival; all day long she listened for the sound of a motor car. But hour after hour passed quietly, until the sun began to sink in the sky, and she at last gave up hope of being rescued.

With the horror of approaching night a new fear took possession of her. Suppose they never came at all! Suppose Mrs. Fishberry meant to abandon her entirely in this gruesome house, until she starved to death, or lost her mind? How long could she hope to keep alive on those dried beans? And the limited supply of water! How dreadful it must be to die of thirst—far more horrible she believed, than of hunger.

But she must not give up so easily. There were knives in that kitchen cupboard; if she worked patiently enough she could cut the woodwork. By cutting the wood and breaking the glass she need not be a prisoner long.

But she would not begin that night, she hastily decided. Such an act of destruction might enrage that ghost in the tower, if it were the spirit of her grandfather, as she had always believed it to

be. No, she would wait for daylight. How sorry she was that she had wasted this whole day!

It was more difficult for her to go to sleep that night than upon the previous one, for she was not tired. But she resolutely read her Bible and kept her thoughts upon Linda and Nana until her eyelids began to droop.

Then, with a contented sigh, she fell back on her pillow asleep.

Chapter XIV

Two Surprises for Linda

Mike O'Malley, the young reporter who had volunteered his help in making an investigation of the empty house, departed immediately after his conversation with Linda and Dot on Sunday morning at Lake Winnebago.

"I'll be over at the place to-morrow, late in the afternoon," he promised, as he put the map of directions into his pocket. "And I'll bring tools with me. Maybe I'll even commandeer a ladder from the nearest farmhouse, so we can climb in a window if it is necessary. Like regular robbers!"

"That's an idea!" approved Linda, thinking how useful such a thing might be in getting into the tower. "Make it a good high one!"

The two girls left their secluded spot and strolled back to the Inn to join the other guests. Here a surprise of an exceedingly unpleasant nature awaited Linda. Her Aunt Emily handed her a telegram which was far from being a message

of congratulation upon winning the race, as the older woman suggested that it might be.

Opening it hastily, she read these threatening words:

"Miss Linda Carlton,
Green-Falls, Mich.

"You are hereby informed that my client, Mrs. Edward Tower (formerly Mrs. Elsie Fishberry), of Chicago, will sue you for $50,000 damages for striking her niece, Helen Tower, with your autogiro. We have a witness.

LEO EPSTEIN,
Attorney at Law."

Linda read the message through twice before she could really believe it. With a blank stare she handed it silently to her aunt.

"Why, that's absurd!" cried the older woman, unusually angry for her. "Fifty thousand dollars! Why, you haven't got that much money!"

"I know. But I suppose Mrs. Fishberry thought we were enormously rich. Mike O'Malley said there was something crooked about this woman, and I believe him. I bet this is the only reason she bothered to get Amy back."

"It's a frame-up, of course," said Miss Carlton. "The witness is someone who is being bribed to lie. And a dishonest lawyer, who is willing to take the case for what he can get out of it. You have a witness too, however, in Dot."

"Yes, but the judge may say that since she's my friend that of course she would testify for me. Oh, Aunt Emily, what shall we do? Wire for Daddy to come to Green Falls?"

"I'm afraid we can't do that, my dear. I had a telegram from him yesterday just before we left home—I forgot to tell you in the excitement over the treasure hunt—informing me that he was sailing for Paris to-day. He is going to wander about France, in some of the smaller towns, partly on business and partly for pleasure. We simply can't wire him."

"Then what shall we do?" repeated Linda, desperately.

"I don't know. We'll have to think about it. Write to Mr. Irwin, I suppose. He is a wonderful lawyer, you know."

"Will you do that for me right away, Aunt Emily?"

"Yes, dear, if you'll promise to cheer up and forget it for the time being. After all you have done nothing wrong, and there is nothing to worry

about— Now, will you go get ready for lunch? It ought to be announced any minute now."

Leaving the disagreeable telegram with her aunt, Linda went to her room to dress. When she returned, another surprise awaited her, which she did not know whether to regard as pleasant or not. She had tried to put the thought of Lord Dudley out of her mind, and here he was again—as fascinating and as handsome as ever.

He was standing in the corner of the reception room talking with Tom Hulbert and another man, a stranger to Linda, when the girl came down the stairs.

"Miss Carlton!" he exclaimed, with his charming smile, and in another moment he was shaking hands with her and introducing the stranger, John Kuhns, a friend of Tom Hulbert, to her.

"But how did you know about this party?" demanded Linda. "We all told you about the treasure hunt, but I didn't think you knew about the house-party here at the lake."

"Oh, Mr. Clavering invited me to join you all here, before I left Green Falls. But I've been very busy, in Chicago, and I couldn't get away last night. If it hadn't been for Mr. Kuhns, I shouldn't be here now."

At this moment Ralph Clavering and his father

joined the little group, the younger man as usual looking annoyed at the reappearance of another admirer of Linda.

"I hope that you and Mr. Kuhns can arrange to stay until to-morrow, Lord Dudley," said the older man cordially. "The party isn't breaking up till the afternoon."

"That's awfully kind," replied the Englishman, "but I'm afraid I can't. I have some rather important business on for to-morrow. So Kuhns and I are flying back this afternoon." He turned to Linda. "In which case," he said, "since my time is so short, may I have a stroll with you after luncheon, Miss Carlton?"

Linda hesitated.

"We were all going to take our planes up this afternoon—" she began.

"That can be postponed until four o'clock," suggested Mr. Clavering, graciously. Ralph, however, frowned moodily, and walked away.

Linda herself was not so sure that she wanted a tête-à-tête with this man. It would be easier to forget him if she did not see much of him. But there was no real reason to refuse, so she met him again at half-past two on the porch.

"I certainly want to congratulate you, Miss

Carlton," he said, as they strolled towards the lake. "And I hear that the prize is money."

"Yes," she replied, smiling. "A thousand dollars. But I am sharing it with Amy, because she really found the place."

"Amy?" he repeated. "That girl—your protégée?"

"Yes."

"And where is she now?" he asked casually. Linda wondered whether he were merely talking to keep the conversation impersonal. Well, he needn't worry about her; fascinating as he was, she didn't want to marry him!

"Her aunt took her away from me," she replied. "It seems that where the treasure was hidden, was really her old home."

"Indeed!" he remarked. "And you say you met her aunt? Then you found out who she was, and everything is all right?"

"Yes. Her real name is Helen Tower. The woman had pictures, and a key to the house. But she was a very disagreeable person."

"Too bad for the child," he muttered. "Did the girl know her?"

"No, she didn't. And she didn't want to go. But Mrs. Fishberry insisted. And now she is making things very unpleasant for me."

"How's that?"

"She claims that I smashed into Amy with my autogiro—that there wasn't any car at all. And she's going to sue me for fifty thousand dollars!"

"How can she?" demanded her companion, angrily. Then his eyes twinkled, and he asked suddenly, "Was there really a car, Linda?"

Linda's eyes blazed. Did this man actually think she would lie? Of course, he hadn't known her long, but she thought he knew her well enough for that.

"Of course, there was a car," she replied, haughtily. "A gray car, driven by an elderly man, at eighty miles an hour—or something like that. I have Miss Crowley as a witness, but they say they have one, too, and I suppose I shall have to go to court."

"Always in the newspapers," he remarked, teasingly.

"Yes, and not only that, but I expect to take a job in the fall that may take me far away from Chicago. It's going to be awfully inconvenient, even if I don't have to pay any money."

They strolled along in silence for a little while, and Linda had a sudden desire to be back with her other friends. This Englishman was not so fascinating upon further acquaintance, and she

longed for Dot. If she had a chance to talk to her about the telegram, she would feel better. Dot always had such wonderful suggestions.

Lord Dudley, however, had one to offer.

"Why don't you try to buy the woman off, Miss Carlton?" he asked.

"What for?" she demanded, angrily.

"Oh, say for about twenty-five thousand—maybe less, if she'd take it. It would save you a lot of time and worry, and maybe money in the end. You may be telling the truth, but how's a judge to know that, if the other people have a witness?"

Linda drew herself up proudly. She was actually beginning to dislike the man.

"I wouldn't think of it!" she exclaimed. "That would be the same as admitting that I was guilty. No, thank you—I'd rather fight."

Looking ahead of her, she suddenly spied Ralph sitting alone on a bench beside the lake. He was probably furious with her for going off with this stranger, and all of a sudden she saw his point of view. Who was Lord Dudley anyhow, to step in between them like this?

"I'll race you to that bench!" she challenged, abruptly. "Ralph looks lonely."

"I'm too old to run," he replied, smiling. "But you go along. I really must be getting back to the

Inn. We're leaving soon—" He hesitated, and held out his hand. "It's good-by, now, Miss Carlton. I'm sailing for England early next week. I don't suppose I'll see you again till you come there on one of your flights."

"Good-by, Lord Dudley," she replied. "But don't expect me soon! I've been across the Atlantic you know, and next time I'll be flying the Pacific."

Chapter XV

The Ghost in the Tower

Linda spent Monday morning inspecting her autogiro and making some minor repairs in preparation for her flight back to Green Falls. She did not tell her aunt that she and Dot were planning to stop at the empty house, for she did not want to worry the good woman. If everything went well, she ought to be home before supper.

Dot had persuaded Bert Keen to return the airplane which she had flown in the race, and she took the precaution of packing some sandwiches and some fruit in the autogiro. On an adventure like this, you never could tell what would happen.

"I hope that Mike O'Malley is there when we arrive," she remarked, as, early in the afternoon, she and Linda climbed into the "Ladybug."

"So do I," agreed Linda. "But I am not counting on him. I have my own tools, and—guess what?"

"What?" demanded her companion.

"I've been practicing picking locks! We won't need a ladder, after all! I'm quite good at it. I think I'd make a first-class burglar."

"That's some accomplishment!"

"It really is. And you never can tell when it will come in handy. If some child were locked in a burning house, or some old woman with heart disease had a spell in the bath tub——"

"Now, Linda!" protested her companion. "So you really think that you can get into that house?"

"Without a doubt. And it's going to be lots of fun."

"Yes—maybe. Suppose there really is a ghost in the tower, Linda! You know you do read of such things——"

In spite of her gayety, Linda shivered. The memory of that ghastly face at the window was still vivid to her.

"It won't be so bad if we go together," she replied. "And there must be some explanation of that queer apparition."

The day was beautiful and clear, and the sun shining; amidst all this loveliness the girls could not believe in ghosts. Dismissing the gruesome subject from their minds, they gave their attention to the country over which they were passing.

Linda was flying low in the hope that she might identify the spot where the accident had occurred. She wanted to see how far it really was from the house which Helen Tower believed to have been her home.

It was Dot who spied it first—the big oak in the field, where they had landed to offer help to the injured girl. A moment later they saw the road, winding as it did over the hill, from whence that gray car had so suddenly and so disastrously appeared.

Dot marked the spot on the map which she held in her lap and Linda flew on towards the house with the tower. About three miles beyond they caught a glimpse of it through the trees.

They flew across in front of the house, over a big field which had evidently once been a lawn, but which was now overgrown with weeds and tall grass, but Linda decided not to land there. It was too conspicuous a place to leave the "Ladybug," in case anyone came along. Instead she came down behind the barn as before, the girls walked around to the front of the house, by the side away from the kitchen. Linda carried her tool kit—"just like an ordinary robber," she remarked—and they climbed the wooden porch steps to the front door.

"Wait!" whispered Dot, in awe. "I hear an awfully queer sound!"

Both girls stood motionless and listened. A dull, rasping noise reached their ears, which continued with monotonous regularity, now and then changing to a squeak.

"The ghost!" breathed Dot.

"No," replied Linda. "It's some animal—or possibly a human being. We better knock on the door before I start to pick the lock. If Mrs. Fishberry is here, she'd jump at the chance to have us arrested."

Raising her hand, Dot thumped loudly on the door. A reply instantly came to them.

"Linda! Oh, Linda!" a girl's voice screamed.

"It's Amy—I mean Helen!" exclaimed Linda, breathlessly. "Just what I was afraid of! That woman locked her in!"

"But what could be the point of torturing the child?" demanded Dot.

"I don't know. That's for us to find out." She lifted her voice. "Amy!" she cried, at the top of her lungs.

"Here I am—around the back!" yelled the girl.

In excited haste Linda and Dot ran down the steps and around the side of the house. There

at the kitchen window, from whose panes the glass had been broken, stood the girl, patiently cutting away at the woodwork with a dull carving knife.

Both girls ran up and kissed her through the broken window.

"I heard the plane, and I was hoping it was you!" said Helen.

"Are you all right?" demanded Linda, almost afraid to ask. She dreaded to think what confinement in this ghastly house might have done to the nervous girl.

"I'm fine," replied the other. "Only I'm a prisoner. But I was going to work my way out."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes. Mrs. Fishberry locked me in and ran away on Saturday."

"Oh, you poor girl!" cried Linda. "And are you starved to death?"

"No. I had oatmeal and water and dried lima beans. Really, I'm all right. And Linda—I remember everything!"

"Honestly?"

"Yes. You can call me Helen now—that really is my right name. I'll tell you all about it when I get out of here."

"I'll get you out," replied Linda. "I'll pick the lock on the front door, and on your inside door."

"Can you really? Is there anything you can't do, Miss Linda Carlton?"

Linda laughed; it was wonderful to find the girl in such good spirits.

"You stay here, Dot," she said, "and keep Amy —I mean Helen—company. I won't be long."

She was right in her surmise; the job did not take long, and she was extremely proud of her new accomplishment. In less than half an hour she opened the heavy door and stepped into the dimly-lighted house. The huge square hall, with its great staircase, the closed shutters, the sparsely furnished rooms cast a gloomy atmosphere. It was just the sort of house a ghost might be expected to haunt.

By means of her flashlight she made her way through the hall to the door where she supposed the kitchen to be. She knocked loudly, calling,

"Yo-ho, girls!"

"Yo, Linda!" was the reassuring reply.

But here it was not necessary to pick the lock, for Mrs. Fishberry had left the key in the door. So Linda merely turned it and walked into the room.

The two girls rushed at each other in joy, and

Dot bounded around the house to join in the happy reunion.

"First I'm going to get some fresh air and some fresh water," announced Helen. "Then let's go."

"Go?" repeated Linda. "Why, we just came."

Helen looked puzzled.

"But didn't you come for me?" she asked. "And now that you've set me free——"

"We weren't sure that you'd be here," explained Linda. "In fact, we didn't expect to find you—we thought you were with Mrs. Fishberry. We really came to explore."

"Explore?"

"Yes. The tower—the ghost you were so frightened of." Linda did not add that she had seen it herself.

"Oh, maybe that was my imagination," returned Helen, lightly. "I don't care about it now that everything has come back. All I want is to find my old nurse—Mrs. Smalley."

"Mrs. Smalley?" repeated Dot. "You don't mean Mrs. Fishberry?"

"No, I don't. I'll tell you all about it, while we explore the house, if you insist on doing that."

So, as the girls walked about from room to room, examining everything, peeping into closets,

inspecting Helen's bedroom, the girl told them the story of her life. They listened breathlessly, sharing with her the intense desire to find the dear old nurse who had been all the mother Helen had ever known.

Both Dot and Linda agreed that it was necessary to set to work at once, but Linda was not willing to leave until she had visited that tower. Though Helen had been able to put the vision of the ghost out of her mind, Linda could not do it so easily. She had seen for herself—in daylight.

"We'll go as soon as we have a look at the tower," she agreed. "But I've just got to go up there, Helen. Please show us the way."

The girl shuddered.

"I'm afraid something may happen, Linda. I—I don't want to go."

"Well, just show us the staircase, and you can stay at the bottom of it and wait for us."

"But I'm as much afraid for you as I am for myself," she insisted.

"Nevertheless, I've got to go. It may have something to do with Mrs. Fishberry—it may help clear things up. By the way, Helen, do you remember her now?"

"No, I don't."

"Do you remember your uncle?"

"Only that there was one, and neither Mrs. Smalley nor my grandfather liked him. They both said he was wicked."

"He may be up in this tower, ready to spring at us with a gun," suggested Dot. "That would be worse than a ghost."

Helen led the way to the third floor of the big old house, and thence to a room which was scarcely more than a closet, with a spiral staircase which ascended to the tower. Linda went up first, followed by Dot, while Helen slowly mounted after them.

It was so dark that had it not been for the flashlight, Linda would never have noticed the door at the top. This opened inward, and she stepped into the tower room. But it, too, was pitch black—a fact which she could not explain when she recalled seeing at least two windows in the tower from the autogiro.

"What a horrible place!" exclaimed Dot, as she too reached the top. "Such a musty smell! And dust!"

"Are you still alive?" came a faint voice from below, and a moment later Helen joined them.

"Better close that door," advised Linda. "We don't want to fall down the steps."

"Where are the windows?" demanded Dot.

"Behind those curtains," cried Linda, making the discovery as she turned her flashlight upon a heavy drapery which hung over the wall.

"Let's pull them down and get some daylight," she suggested. Grasping them with both hands, she gave a tremendous pull, and the heavy curtains fell to the floor in a heap.

The sight which she disclosed made all three girls cry out in horror. The ghost which both Linda and Helen had seen was revealed to them now!

Helen hid her head on Dot's shoulder, but Linda was no longer afraid. Seen from behind, for the figure was facing the window, it was by no means so gruesome. A human skeleton had been draped with a black cloak, and the hollows in the bones of its face had been filled with some preparation like wax. When she examined it closely, Linda saw that the eyes were glass, probably covered with some phosphorous compound, to make them gleam. And the hands, which had especially confounded her on that previous occasion, were actually moving now. But there was a reason: a light string attached them to each other, and a small

weight slid along the string, pulling first one hand down and then the other. It was clever and ingenious—and horrible.

But Linda could not help laughing at herself for being fooled so.

"It looks like a college boy's prank," she said, as Helen was finally induced to examine it for herself. "I suppose your father or your uncle did it in their youth—to frighten the other boys. And they must have forgotten all about it, and left it here."

"Maybe my uncle did it on purpose to frighten me," remarked Helen. "I think he had some reason for wanting Mrs. Smalley and me to move—perhaps so that he could get the house for himself."

"Possibly," admitted Linda.

"Well, let's pull the old thing down, anyway," suggested Dot. "No use frightening the countryside. And hadn't we better take down the other curtains and see whether there are any more?"

Linda turned about and pulled at another drapery. This, however, disclosed only a bare window. A third showed a blank wall behind. Then she and Dot proceeded to dismantle the ghost and to pile it into the corner. It was while they were doing this that a panel fell out of the wall.

"More mysteries!" exclaimed Dot, excitedly. "Here's a hidden closet. Maybe we'll find some money!"

"Or a lost will," added Linda, jokingly, never thinking that she had guessed the very thing.

"How did you know, Linda?" demanded Dot, picking up the yellowed packet. "That's exactly what it is! What was your grandfather's name, Helen?"

"Henry Adolph Tower," replied the girl. "I never knew that he left a will. Is it his?"

"Yes. Oh, come on over here, Linda—give me your flashlight. It's getting dark in here again. Let's read it!"

So busy had the girls been that they had hardly noticed the fading light until they tried to read the words on the written and printed pages. But they had not started from Lake Winnebago until three o'clock, and the flight had been a considerable distance.

Breathlessly, Dot read out the formal, legal words of the will, picking her way slowly among the unfamiliar terms. But there could be no doubt about the contents. Henry Adolph Tower had left the house and grounds and the sum of one hundred thousand dollars in bonds and cash to his granddaughter Helen, and a bequest of five thousand

dollars to Mrs. Smalley. A Trust Company in Chicago had these in keeping until the will should be probated.

Helen's eyes were gleaming and her cheeks were flaming. She simply could not believe her good fortune. Oh, if she could only tell dear old Nana about it, this very minute!

"Now aren't you glad we came up here?" demanded Dot.

"I should say I am," she replied. "Oh, Linda—and Dot—you have done so much for me!"

"What's that queer smell?" asked Linda abruptly changing the subject.

"Something's burning," said Dot.

"I wonder if I left any beans on cooking," remarked Helen. "I was so excited when I heard you girls come in that plane, that I don't remember whether I left the oil stove burning or not."

"Could the kitchen be on fire?" demanded Dot, holding the will tightly in her hands. "Girls, we've got to get out of here!"

Taking the flashlight Linda led the way down the staircase and opened the door of the small room that led to the hall. An overpowering cloud of smoke rushed against her, stifling her so that she closed the door immediately again.

"Stay here!" she commanded to the others,

who had just come down the spiral staircase. "Keep the door closed, while I see whether I can force my way through. The house is on fire!"

Closing the door again, she crept out on her hands and knees through the smoke-filled passageway. The atmosphere was dense with the smoke, so overpowering that Linda gasped helplessly for breath. But she pushed onward to the main staircase, only to see that great wooden structure already in flames.

With a cry of terror she crept back to the door of the room that led to the tower, and fell with a dull thud against it. Dot rushed forward and opened the door, and knew from one look at her chum's face that escape through the house was impossible.

"Come back to the tower!" she cried, "where we can get some air through the windows!"

But Linda only leaned weakly against the steps. She could not answer.

"We'll have to carry her, Helen!" Dot said. "Take hold of her feet. I'd rather jump from the tower if I have to die than be burned alive!"

Together the two girls managed to get Linda up the steps and once there they shattered the glass of the tower windows, for they could not raise

them. The fresh air was reviving; Linda was able to stand up and lean out of the window while the others cried for help.

At that very moment, Mike O'Malley drove up to the house in his car, followed by a huge telephone repair truck!

Chapter XVI

While the House Burned . . .

When Mrs. Fishberry left Helen Tower locked in the empty house on Saturday evening, to take a train back to Chicago, she was exceedingly pleased with herself. Everything had turned out wonderfully, she believed, and she would soon be married to a rich man. When the law suit was over she would go abroad with Ed—or perhaps join him abroad, for he seemed to think it was necessary to get out of the country immediately. Well, perhaps he was a little bit crooked——

But Mrs. Fishberry did not believe him to be as wicked as he really was. She thought that perhaps Linda Carlton had hit Helen with her autogiro, and though there was no real witness to the accident except Dorothy Crowley, Mrs. Fishberry did not consider it wrong to bribe someone to make up the testimony. After all, Linda Carlton must be rich; there was no reason why she

shouldn't part with some of her money. The girl was always winning prizes—probably without much effort on her part, Mrs. Fishberry believed.

She was so late getting into Chicago that night that she waited until Sunday noon to call Ed. She was anxious to tell him of her success, not only in obtaining the pictures and the records about his niece, but of securing the girl herself under lock and key. Ed would rejoice at the news, for he had not expected her to accomplish this feat before Sunday.

To her dismay, however, a strange voice answered the telephone in Ed's apartment. When Mrs. Fishberry gave him her name, he explained that he was Leo Epstein, the lawyer whom Tower had employed to take charge of the damage suit against Linda Carlton.

"And I have sent a telegram to Miss Carlton, informing her of our intentions," he said.

"In my name?" demanded Mrs. Fishberry.

"Yes, of course."

"But I'm not married to Mr. Tower yet," she protested. "It won't be legal for me to sue Miss Carlton unless I'm the girl's real aunt."

"It'll be legal by the time the case comes up. Those things take a long time—unless Miss Carlton is willing to settle out of court. Maybe she will

pay us twenty-five thousand dollars to keep us from suing her."

"She'll never do that!" asserted Mrs. Fishberry.

"Why do you say that?" asked the lawyer. "Mr. Tower seemed to think that there might be some chance of it."

"Because I know Miss Carlton. She isn't the sort of person to run away from trouble. And Mr. Tower doesn't know Miss Carlton, or he wouldn't think she would."

"Hm," remarked Mr. Epstein.

"Well, when will Mr. Tower be back?" the woman inquired impatiently. "I would like to be married before we get the girl."

"That isn't possible, Mrs. Fishberry," he said. "And it really doesn't make a bit of difference. Mr. Tower is out of town now and may not be back for several days. He left word for me to tell you to call him up at the Central Hotel in Milwaukee to-morrow morning, if you had anything to say to him that was important. I suppose if you wanted to see him, you could go there. That is the only message I have, Mrs. Fishberry."

"I see," replied the other, as she hung up the receiver. She was so angry at the way Ed Tower did things, the way he never seemed to consider

what she wanted to do, that she thought of going home to Montana, and dropping her part in the affair. After all, was it worth it? What was she going to get out of it? And she certainly didn't want to have to look after Helen Tower for the rest of her life.

Ed was certainly a selfish man. Oh, he was attractive, and nice if he wanted to be, but wasn't he just using her now to help him get this money? How was she to be sure that he would ever share it with her if he did get it?

She would have dropped the whole thing then and there—for Mrs. Fishberry had never been a dishonest woman before—had it not been for the thought of poor Helen Tower locked alone in that empty house. Although she had no love for the girl, and believed her to be feeble-minded, she could not bear the thought of her being burned alive, as she might be if Ed went alone to the house without knowing that Helen was there. No; Mrs. Fishberry couldn't back out now. She'd have to take the sleeper to Milwaukee in time to be there in the morning, to go with Ed and rescue the girl.

A little after eight o'clock the following morning she arrived at the Central Hotel and was informed that Mr. Tower was at breakfast. She

joined him, for she had eaten nothing on the train.

"Hello, there, Elsie!" he cried, cheerily, as she seated herself at the table with him. "Have you found my niece?"

"Yes," she replied, briefly.

"Where is she now?"

"Locked in the empty house."

"But we don't want her there!" he stormed. "Of all the fool places to leave her—" He stopped, remembering that he was in a public place, and refused to discuss the subject until they were both seated in his gray open roadster, speeding away from Milwaukee somewhat later in the day.

It was then that Mrs. Fishberry insisted upon an explanation of his disapproval of what she had done with Helen.

"I don't see why I should have been bothered with her over Sunday," she said resentfully, "when you were off having a good time!"

"Oh, is that so?" he retorted, in irritation. "Well, I told you to get hold of her—and keep her. Now if she sees me set fire to the house, how's that going to fix me with the police?"

"I never thought of that," admitted Mrs. Fishberry.

"That's the trouble with you! You never think! Well, we'll have to think of something now."

They drove along at a rapid rate after leaving the city, stopping only once to have an early dinner at a wayside inn. It was then that the man decided upon a plan.

"I think the best idea is for you to drive when we get in sight of the house, and I'll get out and hide somewhere while I put on a disguise. You take the key and go into the house and get the kid. But when you get outside again, you'll have to pretend that there's something the matter with the car, because I want it left for me. So you and the kid can walk to the station. I won't sneak up to the house till after you're well out of sight, so as Helen won't see it burning."

"That's all very well for you," objected the woman, "but not so good for me. You know it's at least five miles to the station!"

"Can't help that! It's your fault for not thinking what would happen if you left the kid in that house."

"Oh, all right," she agreed, sullenly. There seemed to be nothing else to do.

But this plan was naturally never carried out, for the simple reason that when Mrs. Fishberry arrived a little after seven o'clock, the girl was nowhere to be found. A hasty glance at the broken lock on the front door, the open kitchen door, and

the smashed windows assured her that Helen had made her escape. It never occurred to her to suspect that the latter might be somewhere else in the house—or in the tower. She felt relieved that she was gone; she was tired of the whole affair.

She ran back to her companion with the news. He fairly snorted with anger.

"Balled everything up, didn't you?" he cried.

Mrs. Fishberry stood still and laughed. He was such a funny-looking object in that disguise—a gray wig and a false beard, and a long linen duster. Though the sun had set, it was not yet dark, and she could plainly see him, crouched under some bushes.

"You're a sight!" she sneered. "And I bet they catch you!"

"What's the matter with you, Elsie?" he demanded.

"Nothing—oh, nothing," she replied hastily, but already she had decided that she was through with Ed Tower.

The man came out of his hiding place and lifted a suitcase from the rear of his car. But he did not think to ask Elsie Fishberry for the key, and here he made a mistake which he was to regret bitterly later on.

He trudged along up the path to the house,

afraid to hurry lest someone see him and suspect him. If he walked along like an ordinary old peddler, nobody would think anything about him.

But once inside the house, he did not loiter a minute. Opening up his suitcase, he took out great wads of cotton waste which had been previously soaked in oil. These he piled under the huge wooden staircase, and applied a match. As the rags burst into flames he hurriedly left the house, carefully closing the door behind him.

Before he had reached the road he could see the smoke pouring through the chimney of the fireplace, and out of the broken kitchen window. There was no doubt that he had succeeded in setting the house on fire, no doubt that it would burn to the ground. By to-morrow the news would have reached the papers. On Wednesday he ought to be able to go to the Trust Company in Chicago and collect that money which was his father's small fortune. For now at last the officials would be assured that Henry Adolph Tower's will could never be found.

He chuckled to himself with satisfaction as he reached the road and looked about for his car. But that chuckle abruptly changed to an oath as he failed to see it. It was gone! Elsie Fishberry had double-crossed him, and had run away!

For a few minutes he stood there in the road, hoping that she was only playing a practical joke upon him, and that she would suddenly drive into sight. But as the time passed he gave up hoping, and snatching off his wig and his beard, he flung them, with his linen coat, into the bushes, and started on his five-mile hike to the station.

Chapter XVII

The Rescue

The very cause of Mike O'Malley's delay in arriving at the empty house on Monday evening proved to be the thing that saved the three girls in the tower. It was the huge ladder on the telephone repair truck.

When Mike left the girls on Sunday with his promise to help them, he drove straight back to Milwaukee to give the story of the treasure hunt to his newspaper. At the same time he asked for Monday afternoon off, in order to follow the "Linda Carlton Mystery," as he called the accident to Helen Tower. When this leave was granted he sat down in his boarding-house bedroom to contemplate what he had better take with him.

"There's something in that tower that mystifies Miss Linda," he said to himself. "And she seems to think it is closed off from the rest of the house. I wonder how we could get in."

He had all sorts of ideas—of going up in the

autogiro and coming down in a parachute, of jumping from the "Ladybug" to the window—but, of course, these things wouldn't do, because most likely the windows would be closed and locked. No; a ladder was the only solution; but how could he carry a ladder on his little Ford?

It was one of his brothers who solved the problem for him. As he had told Miss Carlton on the occasion of his first visit to the bungalow at Green Falls, Mike O'Malley was one of a large family. Two of his brothers had left the farm for jobs in Milwaukee, and one of these was with the telephone company. Pat—for that was his name—would be the very person to help!

It was easily arranged, the only difficulty being that his brother could not leave until four o'clock. However, the boys planned to meet outside of the city, thereby avoiding the worst of the traffic, and they made good speed along the country road. A little before eight, supperless but happy, they drove up to the empty house.

"We're too late!" shouted Pat, leaning out of his truck. "She's on fire!"

Mike had been pretty sure of this fact several minutes earlier, when he had noticed some smoke in the sky, but he had said nothing. They must go

on, he had decided, for Linda and Dot might be trapped inside.

"We better get out of here," called Pat, above the noise of the two engines. "Don't forget we've got gas, and both our cars may explode."

"Pull over there in the field," directed Mike, briefly. "I've got to make sure that the girls are safe."

And then they heard the cries, the wild terrified screams of those three girls trapped in the tower of the burning house.

There wasn't a moment to be lost. Pat took down his extension ladder, and directed Mike how to help him get it up. They worked as fast as they could, but the task appeared to be endless to the tortured girls, watching them in breathless silence from the high windows. It seemed to them as if the ladder would never reach to their height.

"Wish I was a real fireman," was the only remark which Mike made during the whole tense proceeding.

The flames were reaching the roof of the house now, and smoke was streaming from the tower windows. Forcing his hands not to shake, Mike held the ladder while Pat pulled it to its full height. There was one terrible moment, while

they all waited to see whether it would reach to the edge of the window— It did! The boys let out a cry of, "Ready now! Come down, girls!" and held tightly—and prayed.

Dot leaned out of the window to make sure that the ladder was firmly gripping the ledge, and to Mike's surprise, neither she nor Linda climbed out, but little Helen instead. Holding on to Dot's hand, the young girl stepped over, and made her perilous way down the ladder, to the ground.

There was a slight delay, while more smoke poured from the windows. Evidently Dot and Linda were arguing about who should come next, but Dot had to give in, for she knew it was of no use to try to withstand Linda. So she climbed over the ledge and started downward, only to see the window ledge itself catch fire when she was halfway down!

If Linda had been wearing a dress instead of knickers, there would have been little hope for her now. But as it was she managed to straddle the flame and to step on the ladder, just as it, too, caught fire at the top. It swayed for one dreadful second, but the boys held tightly, and pushed it farther against the wall. No one ever came down a ladder faster than Linda Carlton at that moment; it seemed as if her feet scarcely touched the rungs.

When she was finally only six feet above the ground she jumped. It was none too soon; the ladder gave way, and the young people all ran to safety.

"Mike!" cried Linda joyously grasping his hands in an ecstasy of relief: "You're a wonder! How did you ever know to bring a ladder?"

The young man was too excited to talk. He couldn't say a word.

"We must get these cars out of the way," ordered Pat, who had not even been introduced. "Let's all meet down by the road."

"O.K.," agreed Mike, signaling to Helen to get into his Ford.

"My 'Ladybug!' " exclaimed Linda abruptly. She had all but forgotten it. Suppose it were burned!

"Want any help?" asked Mike, as Pat started to drive his truck down to the road.

"No, thanks. But take Dot and Helen with you. I'll meet you there—I hope!"

Running as fast as she could, keeping her face turned from the intense heat of the fire, she passed the barn and saw that it too was beginning to burn. Oh, if the "Ladybug" were only safe! Next to their lives she valued her trusted autogiro. Insurance would mean little to her; it was this par-

ticular plane that she loved, almost as if it were a horse or a dog.

But, miraculously, it was all right, though she realized that she was just in time, for now that the barn was burning, a spark might fly any moment that would set it into flames. Never before had she been so quick in starting its engine. Thank goodness it was in perfect condition, after her work of the morning!

As soon as she had left the ground she circled down to the road, and saw the lights of the truck and the Ford, for it was almost dark now. Selecting a field opposite, she landed her autogiro again and ran across to join the group around the cars.

All the young people had by this time regained their spirits and were talking excitedly and happily, asking each other questions, hardly waiting for explanations, and all shouting at once. Though Pat O'Malley had been a stranger to the girls fifteen minutes before, he now seemed like one of their best friends.

"If we only had something to eat!" sighed Mike, "my joy would be complete."

"Didn't you boys have any supper?" demanded Dot. It was quite dark now, it must be after eight o'clock, she thought.

"No. Did you?"

"No."

"Did you, Helen?" inquired Mike, who still had only a hazy idea how the young girl had happened to be there.

"No. And I only had dried lima beans for lunch."

"The nearest village is about five miles," volunteered Pat. "I've worked along this road before. Shall we all pile into my truck and hunt it?"

"I couldn't leave my autogiro—" began Linda, when Dot interrupted with a suggestion. She had just remembered the food she had brought from the inn at Lake Winnebago.

"Wait!" she cried, joyfully. "I've got chicken sandwiches and peaches in the plane! Does that sound good?"

"Does it sound good!" repeated Mike. "Oh, boy!"

Linda and the two young men ran over to the field immediately, and returned in a few minutes, their arms piled with boxes and the thermos bottles of water which Linda always carried in the "Ladybug." Going over to the bank beside the road, they all sat down while Dot untied the bundles.

"I'll have to count the sandwiches and divide them evenly," she said, laughingly. "Just as if we were all starving Armenians."

"I think Helen should get the most," suggested Mike. "She really has almost starved."

"Oh, this is great!" exclaimed Dot, as she examined the boxes. "There are ten sandwiches—and six peaches—and—and——"

"And what?" demanded Pat, hungrily.

"And two apple pies!"

Both boys let out a whistle, and Helen clapped her hands.

"But how did you two girls ever expect to eat all that for your supper?" asked Pat.

Dot giggled.

"I told the cook to put in a lot," she replied, "because when Linda and I go off on trips we never know how long we'll be stranded."

"But there aren't any desert islands around here," remarked Mike, who had heard the story of the girls' adventures in the Okefenokee Swamp.

"No, but you never can tell," returned Dot. "Now—fall to! Here are two sandwiches and a peach for each one of you, and Helen gets the extra peach."

They ate silently for several minutes, everybody too hungry to talk. Suddenly Helen stopped in the

act of breaking her second peach in two, and cried in dismay,

"Dot! We forgot the will!"

"What will?" demanded Mike.

Linda explained briefly, while Dot reached down into her blouse. Even in the darkness they could all see the yellowed packet which she triumphantly held up to their view.

"I wasn't going to let that get away!" she announced, proudly.

She handed it to Mike who, with the aid of his flashlight, examined it with the greatest satisfaction.

"That's bully, Helen!" he cried, when he had seen enough of it to make sure that it was legal. "And don't let the Fish get any of the money!"

"You're not planning to go back to her, are you?" asked Linda. She was thinking of the law suit, and wondering how Mrs. Fishberry could sue her if Helen denied ever having known her.

"I certainly am not!" replied the girl, emphatically.

Dot proceeded to cut the pies, which they ate perhaps less ravenously, but at least with as great enjoyment as the sandwiches, while they discussed what they would do next.

"I've got to get back to Milwaukee to-night,"

announced Pat, as he began to collect the sandwich papers into a pile.

"So do I," agreed Mike. "Anybody want to come with me?"

"No, thank you," replied Linda, rising from the ground. "I'll take both the girls back to Green Falls with me in the 'Ladybug.' "

"You aren't afraid to fly at night?" inquired Pat.

"Mercy no! The only thing I'm worried about is Aunt Emily. She expected us for supper."

"Perhaps she didn't get there herself," suggested Mike. "They had a motor trip and a boat trip both you know."

"But Mr. Clavering's cars and boats are always reliable," returned Linda. "Oh, well, so long as we arrive before midnight, I don't suppose that she'll be terribly worried."

"We'll wait here till we see you safely up in the air," concluded Mike. "Then Pat and I will be going."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed his brother, who had just finished his task of picking up the papers. "Look what I've found over here in the bushes!"

To the amazement of everyone, he held up a gray wig and beard, and a linen coat to their view.

"What are they?" demanded Linda, as Pat turned the flashlight upon his discovery.

"Looks like a Hallowe'en suit," volunteered Mike. "But what is it doing here?"

"Helen," asked Dot, turning to the young girl, "can you remember having any masquerade parties at your house?"

"We never had *any* parties," she replied. "We were too poor. On my birthdays Nana—I mean Mrs. Smalley—would make cookies, and she and I and my doll would play it was a party. That was all."

Linda was silent. There had been something familiar about the beard in particular, for it was bigger and longer than most real ones. Now she remembered what it reminded her of.

"Remember that old man who knocked Helen down, Dot?" she inquired.

A smile broke over Dot's face.

"Of course! A disguise! I never could understand why a man apparently so aged would be driving at that reckless rate of speed. He wasn't old at all, I guess!"

"By George, that's the answer!" cried Mike, positively elated by the discovery. "Now all we've got to do is to catch the man. Helen, have you any idea who he could be?"

"I'm afraid," answered the girl reluctantly, "that he's my uncle. And if he is, you won't catch him. He's wicked—and clever."

"Anyhow, we'll try," Mike assured her. "Shall I take charge of this stuff, while I see what can be done?"

Helen nodded, and he walked with the girls over the field to the "Ladybug," and stood watching Linda take off into the sky. Fascinated, he continued to gaze at the autogiro until its light was all that he could see—a little spark of flame in the heavens—and then he turned about and joined his brother across the road.

Chapter XVIII

In Quest of the Money

It was a strange and wonderful experience to Helen Tower to fly at night—for on that other occasion she had been only semi-conscious—and she was more thrilled than she had ever been in her life. No longer did the darkness frighten her; the immensity of the heavens, the brightness of the stars, the exhilaration of the swift motion through the air all held her entranced. She did not try to say a word to Dot who was sitting so close to her; she only watched the sky with wide-open eyes.

It was cold, up there in the skies, in the night, but all the girls were dressed warmly, for even Helen wore the flyer's suit which she had put on Saturday morning for the treasure hunt. How many things had happened in the meanwhile; yet here she was riding back to Green Falls in the autogiro, just as she had expected to do!

The night was calm and pleasant, and Linda felt sure of her way. She made the journey in record time, crossing Lake Michigan, and arriving at the airport long before midnight. Before summoning a taxicab, she hastened to telephone to her aunt.

"Hello, Aunt Emily," she said. "I'm so sorry we had to be late——"

"Are you speaking from long distance, Linda?" asked the older woman, immediately. "Where are you? And are you all right—you and Dot both?"

Linda laughed. It was exactly what Miss Carlton always asked, every time her niece took the autogiro up in the air.

"Of course we are!" she replied. "And we're right here at Green Falls airport."

"Oh, that's a relief, dear! I was so worried. Ralph is here with me, waiting for news. I'll send him right over in his car."

"That's fine, Aunt Emily. And by the way, we have Helen—Amy, you know—with us."

"That's good news! And tell her that I have some news to tell her, too. I hope that she will find it good this time—not like Mrs. Fishberry's surprise visit."

"What is it?"

"Better wait and see," replied Miss Carlton. "Ralph's leaving now—see you in ten minutes—good-by dear."

Linda turned to Dot, who had just finished calling her mother.

"Ralph's coming for us," she told her. "So he can take you home first——"

Dot giggled.

"Jim's on the way, too," she explained to Linda. "Isn't it funny, though, the way our boy friends go and sit with our families when we are out on our adventures?"

"They really didn't know what an adventure this was," said Linda. "How much shall we tell them?"

"Oh, everything, of course. It'll be all in the papers to-morrow—trust Mike O'Malley for that! But it can't worry our folks now, because it's all over."

Ralph and Jim arrived at the same time, and almost fell over each other in their wild rush to the girls.

"Where have you been, Linda?" Ralph demanded, as if he were a father speaking to a disobedient child. "Bert Keen's and Tom Hulbert's planes both came back ages ago. What made the 'Ladybug' so slow?"

"We were rescuing Helen," she replied, with a nod towards the girl beside her. "And being rescued ourselves!"

"Rescued! Linda, why don't you let me go with you when you're planning something dangerous, instead of always taking another girl?"

"I didn't know it was going to be dangerous, Ralph," she apologized. "But I'll tell you all about it when we get home, because Aunt Emily will want to hear it, too."

And recount it she did to every last detail, even including the improvised ghost in the tower, to the consternation of Ralph and her Aunt Emily, when, fifteen minutes later, they were seated on the porch of the Carltons' summer home.

"It's a miracle that you came out alive!" exclaimed Miss Carlton, incredulously, when Linda had finished the story. "If Mike O'Malley and that brother of his hadn't just happened along——"

"They didn't *happen* along, Aunt Emily," Linda insisted. "Mike had promised to help us!"

"Why is it that some outsider like O'Malley or Ted Mackay always has to be the one to protect you," muttered Ralph, "when I'd be only too glad——"

"Well, you can next time," agreed Linda, smiling. "Now, Aunt Emily, how about something to eat?"

"Certainly, dear," agreed the latter. "And we ought not to sit out here on the porch, for you girls must be cold. Come into the dining room, and I'll make some hot cocoa."

It was while they were drinking this, and eating their cookies, that Linda suddenly remembered the surprise which her aunt had mentioned.

"What is the news you have for Helen?" she inquired.

"Oh, I almost forgot!" exclaimed Miss Carlton. Then, turning to the girl, she asked, "You say that you have recovered your memory, dear? Can you recall a woman named Mrs. Smalley?"

Helen's eyes lighted up with affection and joy.

"Indeed I can! She's the very dearest memory I have!" she replied, eagerly.

"Well, dear, she's here. Up in bed. She arrived yesterday, while we were away—absolutely worn out. It seems that she had trudged miles and miles in search of you. So Anna very wisely put her to bed. She was somewhat rested to-day, but decided not to get up."

"Can I see her?" demanded Helen.

"I think that she's asleep."

"Oh, I won't awaken her! I just want to look at her."

"All right, dear," agreed Miss Carlton, and, as soon as Ralph had left, she led the girls up to the old lady's room.

Helen tiptoed over to the bedside and, kneeling down, looked eagerly at the worn face on the pillow. Her voice choked with emotion, as she sobbed in thanksgiving.

"Nana darling!" she whispered.

The old lady opened her eyes, and put out her wrinkled arms to embrace the girl.

"My precious child!" she cried. "You do remember me, Helen?" she asked hastily, for Miss Carlton had told her of the girl's loss of memory.

"Yes, yes! I am all right, Nana dearest! And so happy!"

The reunion of the two devoted friends—the child and the nurse—was touching to see. Linda and her aunt crept noiselessly away, and Helen slept that night with her dear old nurse.

The morning newspapers carried the story of the fire, as Linda had expected. But she was surprised to see no mention of her own name, or of the terrifying rescue. Mike O'Malley had actually

sacrificed that thrilling piece of news because he was too modest to mention his own part in the affair!

But a question which had not occurred to Linda before had been played up in the headlines. "Who," the newspaper demanded, "was responsible for setting this house on fire?"—A man in disguise was suspected, it said, because a gray wig and beard had been found near the road. And these must have been left there recently, for otherwise they would have been wet from Saturday's storm!

"Clever Mike!" thought Linda, as she read this deduction. "Now why didn't we think of that before?"

She and Helen and Mrs. Smalley discussed the question from every angle that morning and decided that the criminal who ran Helen down on purpose was the same man that had set fire to the house. And both Helen and Mrs. Smalley agreed that this must be Ed Tower.

"But do you remember a Mrs. Fishberry, who claims that she took care of Helen, ever since her grandfather died?" Linda asked Mrs. Smalley.

The old lady shook her head.

"It is a lie," she answered, quietly. "I have

always taken care of Helen. And I never heard of any person by that name."

"She claims to be Mrs. Edward Tower now," added Linda, telling about the threatened law suit.

But none of these things worried Helen now; she was too much excited over the joy of finding her old nurse and of discovering her grandfather's will in her favor, to worry much about her uncle, or this new aunt. She wanted to talk about the happiness the future held for her and Mrs. Smalley.

"We'll get the money," she said, "and then we'll buy a house in Spring City, shan't we, Nana —to be near to the Carltons!"

"Near to Aunt Emily—yes," agreed Linda. "But I shan't be in Spring City next winter. I am going to take a job as soon as we get back."

"A job?" demanded Helen. "Where? What?"

"Flying, of course. Relief work with a lumber company perhaps. I may go to Alaska. But don't tell Aunt Emily yet, for it isn't settled."

"Oh, poor Miss Carlton!" sighed Mrs. Smalley, and added, turning to her charge, "Helen dear, I hope that you don't ever decide to go in for flying!"

"I only want to go to school," returned the girl, simply. "With girls of my own age."

"And thank Heaven that you can now!" exclaimed Mrs. Smalley, happily.

"Which reminds me," put in Linda, "that we must go to Chicago to collect that money, Helen. Suppose we rest to-day, while I give the 'Ladybug' an inspection, and fly to-morrow? Does that suit you?"

It suited the girl perfectly, and accordingly, the following day, Linda and Helen flew across Lake Michigan to Chicago, the aviatrix as usual promising her aunt that she would return before dark. But once again that promise was not to be fulfilled.

Leaving the "Ladybug" at the Chicago airport, the girls took a taxi to the Trust Company which had been mentioned in Henry Adolph Tower's will. When Linda sent in her card, the Vice-president, a Mr. Hudson, came out himself to meet her.

"How do you do, Miss Carlton?" he said, cordially. "I have read a great deal about you in the newspapers. I am very much honored to meet you."

Linda blushed; she was always embarrassed when older people showed her such deference. So she hastily told the part of the story that concerned the finding of the will, and produced that document to prove it.

The man examined it gravely.

"You are too late, I am afraid, Miss Carlton," he said. "We waited all these years, and refused to give Mr. Edward Tower the money because we believed that his father must have left a will. But when we learned that the old house had burned to the ground, we felt sure that there was no longer any hope of finding one. Yesterday morning we handed over all the bonds and money to Mr. Tower."

"Oh!" gasped Linda in dismay. What a dreadful thing to happen to Helen, after she had built such high hopes! Was she really penniless after all?

"But when Mr. Tower hears of this, perhaps he will give it all back," said Mr. Hudson, soothingly.

"No, no—he won't!" cried Helen, miserably. "You don't know my uncle, Mr. Hudson, or you couldn't suggest such a thing! He never gave us anything in our lives!"

The bank officer looked surprised.

"But he was supposed to be taking care of you out of the income from the estate," he protested. "That was the understanding we had, when we gave him the interest every six months."

"Well, he wasn't! We almost starved—my nurse and I! If it hadn't been for a little garden we had—and now and then selling some of grandfather's books, I don't know how we should have lived!— Oh, he was cruel—my uncle, I mean! It was he who set fire to the house!" She was speaking rapidly, in jerks, so that it was difficult to understand her.

"You mean you think he actually burned that house down on purpose, so that this will would be destroyed?" inquired Mr. Hudson.

"Yes. Disguised as an old man! Didn't you see that in the papers?"

"Yes, I do recall it, now that you mention it. If you really think that is the case, you girls must take out a warrant for his arrest, and try to catch him—before he sails for England."

"England?" repeated Linda. "He is going abroad?"

"Of course," put in Helen. "He's running away with the money as fast as he can."

Mr. Hudson nodded.

"Yes, you may be right, Miss Tower," he said. "For when I asked him his address—whether it was still the same one we have on our records—he said he couldn't give me any, because he was

going to England, and probably going into air service there."

Linda stood up.

"There isn't a moment to be lost!" she cried. "Mr. Hudson, do you happen to know how he was traveling to New York, or wherever it is he is sailing from?"

"Yes, I do. He mentioned the fact that he was flying—going by the first scheduled plane this morning. He said he never used trains."

"So he's air minded," muttered Linda, thinking how much harder that would make things for them.

"I'm afraid you can't catch him," said Mr. Hudson. "If I only knew what boat he was taking we could wire——"

"We're going to catch him!" announced Linda, with that firmness which she so often displayed in a crisis. "We're flying, too! In my own autogiro! And though Mr. Tower has a start on us, we shan't have to stop for stations, and passengers!"

"Wait a minute," urged the officer, seeing that she was determined to carry out her plan. "Let me help you! While you girls get some lunch, I'll see about obtaining a warrant for Tower's arrest. And you can telephone your folks at the same time."

Linda nodded, and pressed the elderly man's hand gratefully. People were always so good to her—so kind! And, handing him the will for safe-keeping, she and Helen rushed off to follow his instructions.

Chapter XIX

A Clew to Follow

After Helen Tower's outburst of rage and disappointment over losing the money which she had been counting on receiving, she became absolutely silent. Without a word she followed Linda out of the office to a telephone booth, then to a restaurant across the street from the Trust Company's building. It was an automat, and Linda thought that the novelty of putting nickels into a slot machine to obtain food might divert Helen's thoughts from her own troubles. Surely a girl who had lived in the country all her life had never seen anything so unusual as this; surely she would be interested. But Helen showed no enthusiasm at all.

"What do you want for your lunch, Helen?" Linda asked.

"I'm not hungry," replied her companion, listlessly.

"But you must eat, while we have the chance!" Tears came up into Helen's eyes.

"I'm a pauper again," she said, in a melancholy tone. "I can't even pay for what I eat."

"Don't be silly, dear!" urged Linda, with an effort at cheerfulness. "Don't forget you have five hundred dollars of that prize money—which you earned yourself! And besides, I think we're going to catch that man."

Helen, however, refused to be encouraged.

"Even if we do, he'll have spent it," she objected.

"Then he'll have to pay it back! Or go to prison— But come along, we must get into line with our trays. We'll choose a regular hot dinner now, and then I'll buy some sandwiches to tuck into the autogiro for our supper, so we shan't have to stop on our way, and lose any time."

In spite of her indifference, the attractive food did make its appeal to Helen, and once she began to eat she found that she was hungry. She even smiled when Linda went back to the slot machines for ice cream and chocolate cake.

It was while the girls were eating their dessert that a familiar figure entered the restaurant. A woman, whom both Linda and Helen had been hoping they would never see again in their lives. It was none other than Mrs. Fishberry!

Helen's eyes met Linda's in annoyance.

"I sincerely hope she doesn't see us," remarked the latter, giving all her attention to her ice cream.

But this wish was not fulfilled, for the woman noticed them and recognized them immediately. And, glad of a chance to clear herself of her part in the unpleasant affair, she hurried over to their very table and sat down with her tray.

"How do you do?" she said, brightly. "I am so glad that you are with Miss Carlton again, Helen. When I came back to the old house for you on Monday, I wondered where you had gone."

The old sense of fear came back to Helen, and she reached for Linda's hand. What was this woman planning to do to her now?

Noticing this gesture, Mrs. Fishberry smiled.

"You needn't be afraid of me," she said, reassuringly. "I'm not after you now—in fact, I don't want you! I've broken with Ed Tower."

"You mean you aren't married to him?" demanded Linda, thinking at once of the threatening telegram, and of the law suit that was planned.

"No, I'm not—and I'm not going to be!" returned the other, emphatically. "He's too crooked for me." She did not add that Tower himself had tired of her, and tried to escape from her first.

"I ran away from him in his own car," she

continued, "while he was setting that house on fire. A crime like that was too much for me."

"He did set the house on fire?" Linda repeated, excitedly. "We thought so."

"Linda and I and another girl were in it," remarked Helen, grimly.

"Oh, my heavens!" exclaimed the woman, aghast at these words. "But you got out?"

"Yes," replied Linda briefly, as she rose from her seat. "We must go now, Mrs. Fishberry— Oh, I might ask you—I suppose that law suit is off, then, if you are not Mrs. Tower?"

"Yes, of course."

"And one thing more—just to clear things up in my own mind—did you ever see Helen in your life before your visit to Green Falls?"

"No, I didn't," admitted the woman. "That was all Ed's lie—to get money out of you. Oh, I am innocent—I've never done anything bad till I got in his clutches. But he looks like a prince, and smiles like an angel, and he wound me right around his little finger!"

An inspiration came to Linda: perhaps Mrs. Fishberry knew something of Ed Tower's plans. Perhaps she would be willing to tell, now that she was so angry with him.

"You don't know where he is now, do you?" she asked, trying to speak casually, as if she were not much concerned.

"No, I don't!" replied the other, flatly. "And I don't care! I'm going to clear out of here, and go back to Montana."

"Mr. Tower didn't say anything to you about going abroad?"

"Oh, yes, he did. He's clearing out of the country, the minute he collects that money from his father's estate. He got some kind of job with an air-transport company at Newport News."

"Air-transport company!" repeated Linda, in amazement. "But why should he want to get a job, when he had all that money? Does he like work so much?"

"No, but he was afraid to go to England by an ordinary passenger boat, for fear he'd be caught. You know—passports, and all that sort of thing. Nobody but me and the man who got him this job know that he's going."

"So if the police look for him, they won't be able to find him?" concluded Linda, with a twinkle in her eye. What luck it was, to get the very information she wanted—and from a person she had actually tried to avoid!

She held out her hand.

"Shall we part good friends, Mrs. Fishberry?" she asked, pleasantly.

"O.K. with me," replied the woman, accepting the hand shake with a smile.

The girls were hardly out of the door when Linda grasped her companion's arm and whistled for joy.

"We're going to get him now, Helen!" she cried, exultantly. "Think of the time we'll save by flying straight to Virginia, instead of going around by New York!"

"You believe Mrs. Fishberry was telling the truth?" inquired Helen, doubtfully.

"Oh, yes! Your uncle has let her down—decided that he didn't want to marry her and share the money with her after all—and she's sore. She was glad to tell all she knew about him!"

They were walking rapidly, approaching the Trust Company's building, when Linda suddenly stopped, and frowned.

"Why didn't I ask Mrs. Fishberry to describe Mr. Tower?" she demanded. "We may not know him if we do see him!"

"I might recognize him," remarked the other girl. "Though at the present minute, I haven't the slightest idea what he looks like. But that really doesn't matter, Linda. If Mr. Hudson gets that

warrant for his arrest, all we have to do is ask for him."

"Maybe," agreed Linda, trying to be hopeful. "Only I'm afraid that once he got that money, he'd travel under a different name."

Helen looked dismayed at the idea.

"He would if he could, I suppose," she said. "But let's hope that he got this job under his own name—and had to keep it."

Returning to the office where Linda was to meet Mr. Hudson again, she sat down at a desk to plot out her flight to Virginia. She had expected to follow the regular air line from Chicago to New York, but, of course, this plan was changed now.

"It's going to be fun, Helen!" she cried, as she bent over the map. As usual the anticipation of a long flight gave her a joyous thrill.

"We'll fly southeast," she announced, "and I think I can pass right over Spring City. The only difficult part is the Allegheny Mountains—but I've flown over mountains before. You aren't afraid, are you, Helen?" she asked. "You wouldn't rather go back to Green Falls, and wait for me there?"

"I should say not!" protested the girl, eagerly. "I love flying, you know that, Linda! And I never get a bit sick."

"There's not much danger of that in an auto-

giro," replied the capable young aviatrix. "You see we don't feel air pockets, as people do in other planes—now, let me see—I think we can make Spring City before dark to-night! Wouldn't it be fun to stay in our own house?"

"I should say it would!" exclaimed Helen, in delight. "But could we get in?"

"Surely. I always carry a key with me—with my other keys, you know. Oh, Helen, that will be fun! And we'll start early to-morrow morning for Newport News, Virginia."

"Do you suppose we'll catch him?"

"I hope so. If he left here this morning, he'd hardly be planning to sail before Friday morning. And I think we'll arrive some time Thursday afternoon."

"If everything goes right," amended the other.

"Yes," agreed Linda. "If everything goes right. If we don't run into a storm over the mountains!"

Chapter XX

Flying Over the Mountains

Everything went well with Linda Carlton and Helen Tower on that first lap of their flight in the autogiro from Chicago to Spring City, in Ohio. The weather continued fine all afternoon and the "Ladybug's" motor droned on in perfect rhythm. It was not yet dark when Linda made her landing in the field behind her own house.

Helen was wildly excited at the idea of seeing the Carlton home; for the time being she had forgotten her terrible disappointment at the loss of her money. In the calm happy hours of the flight her faith in the goodness of the world had been restored. She believed that somehow, some way, Linda Carlton would succeed in the end.

"Why, your place is as big as our old house!" she exclaimed. "All except that extra wing—and the tower. But so different! So beautiful!"

Linda smiled; she too had always admired her charming home.

She unlocked the door, and after they had both washed and eaten some supper which Linda ordered sent in from a delicatessen store, the aviatrix spent the rest of the daylight going over her engine. She wanted everything in perfect shape to start again on their journey at six o'clock the next morning.

She took the opportunity, however, to call her aunt on the telephone, and enjoyed surprising her with the news that she and Helen were sleeping in her own home that night.

When the alarm clock rang at five-thirty the following morning, Linda could not believe that day had really come. Then, as she sleepily crept out of bed, she glanced out of the windows, and saw the reason for the total lack of light. The skies were cloudy!

"Just our luck!" she muttered. "The day we have to fly over the mountains!"

"Hadn't we better wait awhile?" suggested Helen, sleepily; "to see if it clears up?"

"We daren't," replied Linda, gravely. "If we don't get to Virginia to-day, there won't be any use of going at all. Mr. Tower will surely be off for England to-morrow."

At these words Helen became wide awake, and recalled the importance of their flight to her,

and she dressed quickly, even insisting upon getting the breakfast, while Linda filled her autogiro with gas and oil from a supply which she kept at home.

While Helen packed sandwiches and filled the thermos bottles with water for their lunch, Linda hunted an old rain coat and some extra clothing from the closets. Her own slicker was packed in the "Ladybug," but Helen would need something if they ran into the storm.

They made their start about half-past six, before it was actually raining. Linda made good time across Ohio and West Virginia, keeping steadily onward, bearing to the southeast, in spite of the light rain that was falling. Neither girl wanted to land for lunch, so Helen fed Linda sandwiches and water from the passenger's cockpit. The aviatrix's one idea was to cross the Allegheny Mountains before the storm grew too intense.

But it was not to be, for as she came to the hills, Linda saw that she was running right into the storm area. All about her was grayness; she could not see land anywhere, and in this mountainous region, her altimeter was not an infallible guide. In the effort to play safe she directed the "Ladybug's" nose upward, to keep clear of the moun-

tains, but here the wind was intense, sending the rain into their faces, delaying their progress.

Never, she thought impatiently, had she been flying so slowly. It was impossible to make headway in the face of this wind. At this rate, they would be too late; they could not hope to reach the coast before nightfall!

Desperately deciding that she must take a chance for once, she dropped her autogiro several hundred feet. The relief was immediate; the winds were far less intense, and her progress became more rapid. But she must watch carefully, she warned herself; in this obscurity she could not tell how near to the ground she was.

At that moment she was far from the earth, just as her altimeter intimated, for she was flying over a valley. But she could not know that it was a valley—at least not until it was too late! Even to Linda's watchful eyes the disaster came suddenly. In an instant the mountain seemed to be rushing at her, with the same inevitable force that Ed Tower's car had run into Helen. With a gasp of horror she shut off her power, praying that the rotors would break the fall. The plane hovered a moment, for it had not been going fast, and began to descend on the side of that mountain. But it was too close to it; a moment later it crashed

against the hill, with an impact that threw both girls from their cockpits.

Linda jumped to her feet immediately, unharmed except for some bruises, and dashed over to her companion who was lying in the bushes, still unable to understand what had happened.

"Are you hurt, Helen?" Linda cried, fearfully. How dreadful it was that everything seemed to happen to this poor child! Now, if some bones were broken, in this lonely place far away from doctors and hospitals, there would be little chance for the girl's recovery. Linda shivered with fear as she knelt down beside her.

But Helen sat up and smiled reassuringly.

"No, I'm all right, Linda," she said. "But what happened?"

"We bumped into a mountain," returned Linda, laughing in sheer relief. "It's this awful weather —I couldn't see where I was going."

"Is the 'Ladybug' wrecked?"

"I don't know yet. I haven't examined her. I was too much scared about you."

Helen stood up.

"Well, come on, let's look and know the worst. I guess it's good-by to my money now."

Linda did not reply, but dashed back to the autogiro to examine it for damages. The propeller was

all right, and the rotor blades—thank goodness—for evidently the "Ladybug" had struck on her side. But one wheel and one wing were damaged.

"It doesn't look so bad," remarked Helen, as she watched Linda anxiously. "Can you make it fly again, or shall we have to stay here the rest of our lives?"

Linda laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh, somebody'd rescue us before that. Ralph Clavering, probably—Aunt Emily told him just where we were going. But that isn't going to be necessary, because I can fix it."

"Can you really, Linda? Even that broken wheel?" demanded the girl, in awe.

"Yes. I carry an extra wheel and material to mend the wings. But it's going to take time."

Helen's smile faded; she knew what this meant. They would be too late to catch her uncle!

"Well, it can't be helped," she remarked, with a sigh of resignation. "We're lucky that we got out alive."

Linda looked about her, surveying the landscape. It was a lonely place, with no house anywhere in sight. Trees and bushes covered the mountainside sparsely, and below in the valley a stream was running. But there was no shelter anywhere from the storm.

"I'm going to get right to work," she announced to Helen, "and you better see what you can do about making a fire. If you go up the mountain farther, under those thick trees, you may be able to find some dry wood. And then we can get warm and make some hot tea for our supper."

"Supper?" repeated Helen. "It isn't time for that yet, is it?"

"No, not yet. But I'm afraid I'll be a good while fixing the 'Ladybug.' We'll have to make the best of it."

Helen nodded, determined to be a good sport and not to make things any harder than was necessary for Linda. After all, it was for Helen's sake that the brave young pilot had risked this flight over the mountains in the storm. She would do her part to make the older girl as comfortable as possible.

She spent the rest of the afternoon collecting wood and clearing a dry spot under the trees for their camp fire, and she managed to cook supper from a can of baked beans which Linda had in the autogiro. What light there was—for it was still drizzling a little and the skies were gray—was fading when Linda, tired and dirty, announced that she had completed her task.

"That supper certainly smells good," she said,

as she used a little of their water to wash her hands. "And I'm starved!"

"So am I," agreed Helen. "Are you really finished, Linda? Do you think the 'Ladybug' will fly again?"

"I hope so," replied the aviatrix, seating herself beside the fire and taking the plate of beans which Helen offered. "My only difficulty will be to get her started. There's no place for a take-off."

"I never thought of that. I believed that an autogiro could start anywhere."

"Well, not quite anywhere. There must be a little runway," explained Linda. "But I think the two of us together can push her over to that road —at least it's supposed to be a road, I guess—if we go carefully. Will you help me after supper?"

"Of course," agreed Helen. "It isn't much of a road—I was looking at it this afternoon—but at least it's clear of bushes. But do you really think we can make it?"

"I hope so. There aren't any trees in the way. If there had been any in the spot where we hit," she added, "I don't suppose we should be alive to tell the tale."

Helen shuddered.

"You do have the most marvelous escapes,

Linda!" she remarked. Then she looked grave. "But all on account of me. What a peaceful summer you would have had, if you hadn't happened to see my accident."

"My summer has been fine!" Linda assured her. "And I should have been flying somewhere, anyhow—and probably would have met with other adventures. I don't like things to be slow, you know."

The girls finished their supper, and as soon as they had cleared up and put out the fire, they started upon their dangerous task of getting the "Ladybug" out of the underbrush. For a time it seemed as if it were going to be impossible, but by digging up some bushes, and removing some rocks in its path, they finally got her started. The difficulty then was to stop her, but Linda carefully applied her brakes, and finally they managed to reach the road.

It had grown dark by the time they had finished, but the rain had ceased and they felt well pleased with their success. Hot and tired and damp with perspiration and the recent rain, Linda sat down on the wet grass for a rest.

"Let's take a swim, Helen," she suggested. "I see a stream down in the valley. Then we ought to be able to get some sleep, so long as it's stopped

raining. We can spread our slickers on the ground."

"Sleep!" repeated the other girl in dismay. "Aren't we going to fly?"

Linda shook her head.

"I'm sorry, dear," she replied, gently. "But I'm not going to risk it. I don't know where we are, and these mountains are too unfamiliar for me to try it on a night like this, particularly when I'm so tired, and I haven't even tested the 'Ladybug.' "

Helen nodded; she saw the wisdom of Linda's decision. They were probably too late now, anyway. This was Thursday night; they must have lost all chance of catching her uncle before he sailed.

The mountain stream was shallow and cold, but it felt good to Linda after her hard afternoon's work. She waded about until she found a place deep enough to lie down, and here she relaxed with content.

But it was too cold to stay in the water long, and fifteen minutes later, with renewed energy she began to build a new fire, down by the stream, away from the autogiro. By this time her young companion was exhausted; when she made a feeble effort to help Linda with the fire, the latter com-

manded her to spread out her slicker and go to sleep.

An hour or so later, when Linda's fire was burning brightly, the clouds dispersed and the stars shone out in the sky. With a contented sigh Linda sat there for a long time, until the fire had burned out, and the mountains looked black and forbidding. She could not help wondering about them; they were so deep and silent in the night. What strange creatures might live there? Were there any dangerous animals prowling about, to molest these two lonely girls? The thought made Linda shiver for a moment, and she rose abruptly to her feet, determined to get her revolver out of the autogiro.

Her sudden movement brought a quick response from the woods. A black, shadowy creature appeared from behind a tree only a dozen feet beyond her, and she involuntarily cried out in terror. Oh, why hadn't she thought of that revolver sooner? She hadn't even a stick to protect her if this was a bear or a wolf, sneaking up in a nightly attack in search of food.

Her cry wakened Helen, who shot up from the ground as if she had been hit.

"What is it, Linda?" she demanded, her voice hoarse with terror. "A bear, or a ghost?"

"Neither—" returned the other, vexed with herself for her fear: "It's—it's—a deer! And look —Helen—he's running for his life! He's much more afraid of us than we are of him!"

Helen sighed in relief, but she still clung to Linda's arm.

"Come and sleep beside me," she urged. "The next visitor may be a lot worse!"

"I'll be prepared for the next one," asserted Linda. "With my revolver, my knife—and a stout stick!"

But though she put all these weapons beside her, Linda had no use for them that night, and both girls slept soundly until the sun wakened them the next morning.

Chapter XXI

A Strange Landing

Flying over the mountains in the bright, calm sunlight was a very different proposition from clearing them in the face of wind and rain, and Linda encountered no difficulty at all as she set out the next morning. Neither she nor Helen had much hope of catching the man who had stolen the bonds and the money, but both girls decided it was worth taking a chance. So long as they had come this far, it would be foolish to turn back without finishing the flight.

They arrived at the Newport News airport a little before ten o'clock, and Linda set herself immediately to the task of finding out where the air-transport company was located. When she had secured this information she stepped back into her autogiro, prepared to fly to the spot. She was not wasting any time now with taxicabs, for wherever she went, she felt sure there would be a landing place large enough for the "Ladybug."

She had been directed to the shore on the Chesapeake Bay, and here she found hangars and planes and officers. A smiling young man came to greet her immediately.

"Good morning," said Linda, quickly. "We have come from Chicago to find a man named Edward Tower. I understand that he was sailing to England on an air transport—leaving to-day, perhaps?"

Her heart beat rapidly while she waited for his answer.

The young man nodded.

"There was a transport that left at nine o'clock this morning," he replied, to both girls' utter dismay. Only an hour ago! They had lost the race by sixty short minutes!

"Oh!" gasped Linda, sadly, and tears of disappointment came into Helen's eyes.

The young man seemed to be thinking.

"I can't recall anyone by the name of Tower," he said. "And I myself went over the lists."

Linda's eyes narrowed.

"Then Mr. Tower must be using another name —just as he used the disguise of an old man—" she added, to Helen. Then, turning to the officer, she explained that she had a warrant for Tower's arrest.

"There couldn't be another boat going to England?" she asked.

"No. Air transports aren't like passenger boats," he replied, "sailing every few days. There are only a limited number in existence."

Linda was silent, trying to think of something that she could do. It was the young man who finally made the suggestion which she followed.

"Look here, Miss," he said, "why don't you go after the boat? You have an autogiro, haven't you?"

"Yes—" replied Linda, not knowing what he meant.

"Well, fly out over the ocean till you find them. I'll show you a picture of the transport, so you can spot it. But you couldn't miss it anyhow. Then hover over it, and I'll give you a mail bag to drop down. That'll be a signal—the Captain'll clear the deck for you to land."

"Land on a ship's deck?" repeated Linda, in amazement.

"Sure. With a 'giro it's easy—if you know how to manage her. Lt. Melville Pride did it a while ago—maybe you read about it in the papers?"

"No, I must have missed that," answered Linda. "But did he take off again? I wouldn't want to go all the way to England."

"Sure he took off. The crew helped, I believe—But, of course, Lt. Pride is an expert. If you're a beginner, I wouldn't advise you to try it."

Linda looked grave, but Helen burst out laughing.

"I guess you don't know that this is Miss Linda Carlton!" she announced proudly. "The girl who flew the Atlantic Ocean alone!"

The young man gasped, and held out his hand, which Linda shook cordially.

"I'm honored to meet you, Miss Carlton," he said. "And, of course, you can land on that ship. Go ahead and do it!"

"I will," replied Linda, who always made her decisions quickly. "Just let me look at my gas——"

Ten minutes later she took off from the shore, pointing her autogiro out towards the ocean. Her spirits were high; she had never been so excited before. This, she thought to herself, must be the way the pirates of old felt, when they went after a ship!

It was not long before she spotted the ship, for the "Ladybug" made much better time than the transport. Circling about, she gradually descended until she was almost over the ship. Then she leaned out of the cockpit and dropped the mail

bag, with a message pinned on it to the effect that she wanted to make a landing.

Confusion immediately arose on the ship's deck, as Linda could easily see, without even the aid of her glasses. Men and officers hurried to and fro, clearing a large space. They had no way of knowing that their visitor was not some high government official, but only a girl of eighteen!

At last the man who was probably the captain gave her the signal, and Linda descended cautiously, thankful that she had had plenty of practice in coming down on exact spots. Her experience in the Okefenokee Swamp had not been in vain, for she landed with confidence now. It was as pretty a demonstration as the crew had ever seen.

"Pretty neat!" exclaimed the Captain, rushing over to her side. Then, in consternation, he exclaimed, "By George! It's a girl!"

"Two girls!" corrected Linda, climbing out of the cockpit, and trying not to look embarrassed. How she wished her companion were Dot Crowley, instead of modest little Helen Tower! For Dot would do all the talking, and take charge of everything.

She looked about in confusion at the men who gathered so quickly around her, and she could not

distinguish the Captain. Then, all of a sudden, she spied a familiar face. Lord Dudley, amongst all those strangers!

"Miss Carlton!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Am I the reason we are being honored with this visit?"

Linda laughed and shook her head.

"I'm afraid not, Lord Dudley," she said, holding out her hand. "But it's good to see somebody that I know. Now will you please introduce me to the Captain?"

"Certainly," agreed the man, and he hastened to do the honors.

Cautiously, however, Linda asked to speak with the Captain alone, and he took her into a cabin while she stated her business, asking for a man named Edward Tower, and showing her warrant and a note from Mr. Hudson, stating the facts concerning the will, and the taking of the money and bonds.

The Captain, however, gazed at the papers gravely.

"We haven't any man by that name," he stated.

"Then he must be using another name," Linda replied, desperately. "Oh, he must be here! He just must!"

The Captain looked exceedingly sorry for her,

but he explained that he did not see how he could possibly find out. "We haven't a detective on board," he added, helplessly.

Linda stood up. She had forgotten Helen, had left her sitting alone in the autogiro. Their only hope now lay in the girl's recognizing her uncle.

She went back to the deck, where Lord Dudley met her and claimed her as his guest. That he was proud of her, in front of all those officers and men, could not be disputed. He had almost decided to ask her again to marry him.

Together they walked towards the "Ladybug," from which Helen Tower suddenly leaped.

"Uncle Ed!" she cried, in wildest excitement.

Linda and Lord Dudley looked about them, questioningly.

"You've found him, haven't you, Linda?" demanded the girl, rushing over and grabbing Lord Dudley by the arm. "Hand over my money!" she commanded, dramatically.

Lord Dudley pretended to look puzzled, but beneath it all Linda could see a hidden tinge of fear in his eyes.

"But this is Lord Dudley, Helen—" Linda insisted.

"It's my uncle Ed Tower!" repeated the girl, emphatically. "I know it. Don't you remember,

Linda—when I saw him before on the Country Club porch, at that tennis match, I said he looked familiar?"

"Why, this is nonsense," objected the man, trying to keep his voice calm. "I will appeal to the Captain if you think it is necessary, Miss Carlton."

But the Captain, it seemed, was only too ready to help the girls. Immediately he demanded a search of the man's belongings; if Lord Dudley was in reality Edward Tower, the money and the bonds must be hidden somewhere in his quarters. The Captain sent three trusted officers to find out.

Linda and Helen remained on deck with the Captain and the man posing as Lord Dudley, and the girls told the story of the finding of the will and the confession of Mrs. Fishberry. Ten minutes later the searchers returned, bringing fifty thousand dollars in bonds, and fifty thousand in cash! There could be no doubt now of the man's identity.

"You want to arrest Tower, don't you, Miss Carlton?" asked the Captain, as he put the valuables into her hands. "Even though you got the money?"

Linda looked questioningly at Helen.

"We had better," answered the younger girl.

"He might try to run over me again. Or burn more houses, with people in them!"

Linda nodded; it was not safe for a man like Ed Tower, who could even pose successfully as an English lord, to be at large. There was no telling what wickedness he might accomplish in the future.

"Then suppose I send a pilot back with him in your autogiro—with the warrant for his arrest. You girls can wait here until the autogiro returns."

Linda agreed, and it was all accomplished in an incredibly short time. An hour later, with their small fortune carefully stored in the "Ladybug," they set out for home.

Their first stop was Baltimore, for they flew north this time, and here they were met by an old friend of Linda's father, a banker who took charge of their money and bonds, and who insisted upon taking them to his home to spend the week end with his daughters.

It was Monday afternoon when the girls finally reached Green Falls, having flown the whole journey—through Pennsylvania, over the Allegheny Mountains, north through Ohio and Michigan—without a single mishap. The entire summer colony was out to greet them, it seemed, but little

Helen Tower saw only Mrs. Smalley, her dear old nurse.

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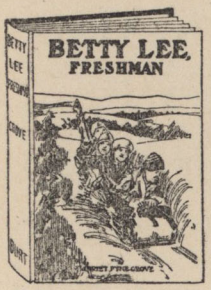

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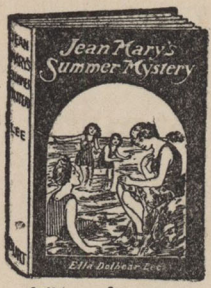

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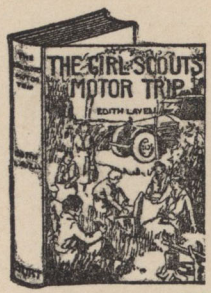

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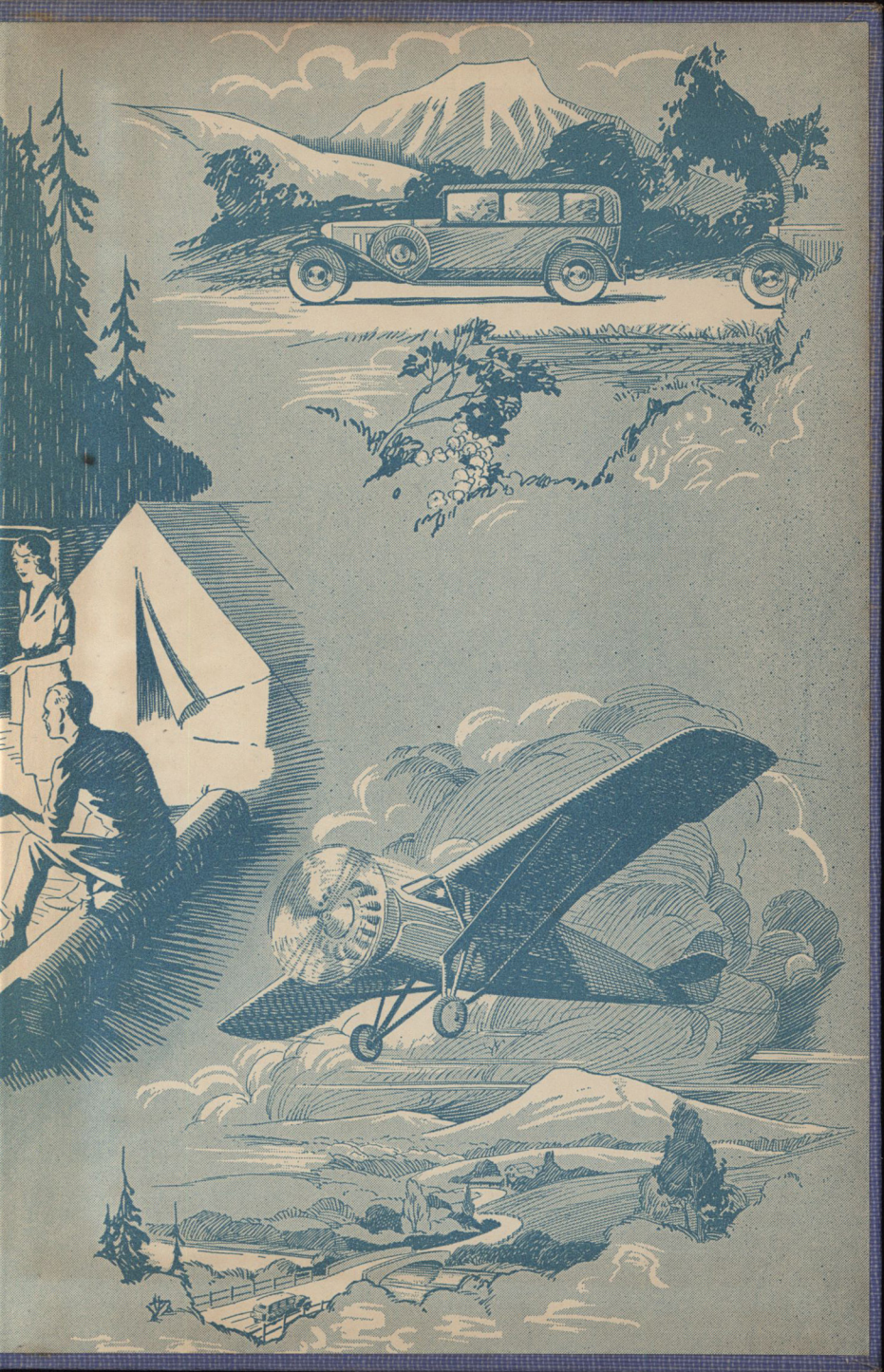
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